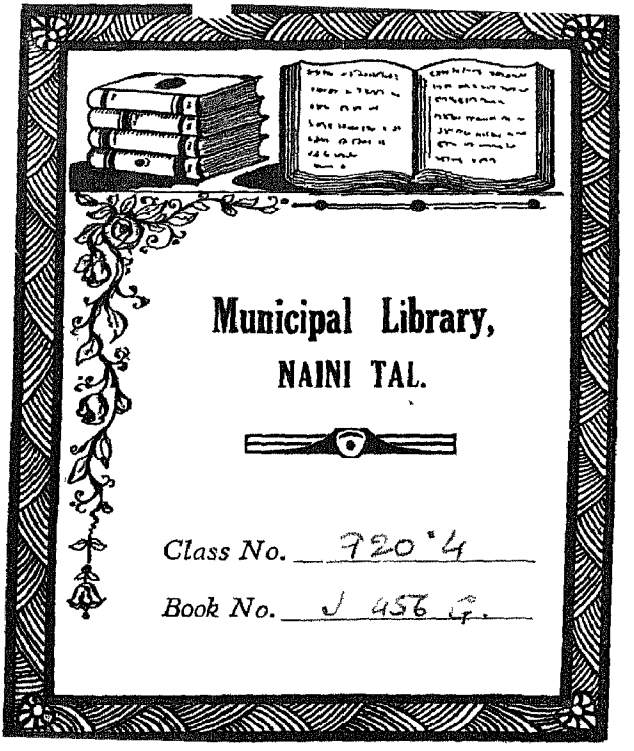


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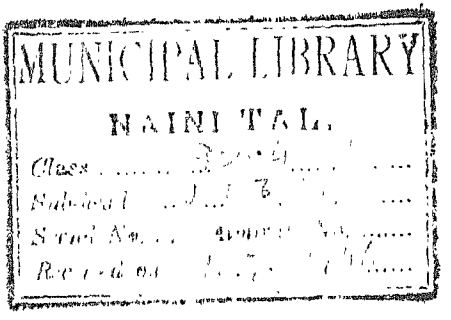
GEORGIAN ADVENTURE

The Autobiography of

DOUGLAS JERROLD

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PREFACE

WHEN I began these memories of events and men in the Georgian epoch, it was drawing to its peaceful and natural close. As I conclude them, we are being asked, under episcopal threats, to take up the thread again. We are to go back, we learn, to the traditional Georgian ways ; our English God is to fulfil himself in the same fashion for another generation lest some new customs should corrupt the world.

Alas, history will not accept this resurrection of the Georgian epoch, any more than it accepted the brief and tragic Edwardian resurrection. It takes time to give character even to the best vintages. The Georgian epoch is ended, whether we like it or no. It ended when a very good man and a very great King died on January 18th, 1936. Not a score of archbishops can recreate it. It had a character of its own, derived less from the momentous events which it witnessed than from the circumstances of those who witnessed them and played their part in them.

The temper of the Georgian epoch and some of its quality, was a Victorian legacy. It was the last epoch in which the problems of the new age were faced by men who had come to manhood under the discipline of the old traditions of public life, of letters and of manners. The whole burden of the storms and struggles of these historic twenty-five years was carried by men and women born in the Victorian age, whose childhood was spent in a world now wholly passed away, and which is, in fact, unintelligible in its standards, beliefs and practices to the latest generation. This is the explanation of my title and the justification of my choice of a subject. I was seventeen when I attended the Coronation of King George V. The signs and

portents of the new age were around me—the beginnings of flight, the feminist uprising, the awakening of Japan, the beginning of the long agony of Russia, the threat of civil war at home and the growing menace of war across the Channel. Amid these strange but clear portents vast schemes of social and political change were being discussed. As a privileged schoolboy I listened to the protagonists debating across the floor of the House of Commons with eloquence and gravity.

My Georgian adventure was the adventure of the whole generation whose fate it was to come to manhood amid these portents and to spend the first twenty-five years of their adult life amid changes so rapid and continuous as to leave of the world in which they had been brought up little but a memory.

Yet it was that memory, or so it seems to me, which gave our adventure its savour. We, too, are Victorians, we whose task it was to watch the destruction of the Victorian foundations at our own hands.

We are building, of course, a brave and better world. Who that looks across the Channel to France or Spain, to Germany or Russia, or who that contemplates that new peace of the Antonines which is spreading eastward from the Urals to the Pacific and southward along the course of the Danube to the Eastern Mediterranean, who that looks anywhere at all, in fact, can doubt it? As I walked last night across the Horse Guards Parade the lights were lit in the War Office and the Admiralty, and their denizens had stayed late, no doubt to meditate in greater quiet on this peace.

Does that mean that our adventure, so ardently begun, has ended in nothing? I think not. The Georgian adventure has been an adventure of the mind and soul as well as of the body, and as the tumult and the shouting dies, we can see that the ground is cleared for a battle of first principles, the nature and purpose of which, long obscured by custom, is only just becoming evident. The new reign will see that battle joined and

its problems will be, for that reason, more clear cut and their issue more evident for good or ill. It will be different in character and tempo from the age of which I am going to write. There will be less room, but also less excuse, for mistakes. It will be an age in which knaves will play a greater and fools a somewhat smaller part. The final outcome will depend on our ability to learn and to profit by the Georgian adventure.

I am writing that adventure as it came to me, and I plead "not guilty" to the charge of egotism. It has been my good or bad fortune, take it as you will, to have lived sufficiently close to great events to be able to know what was going on, but not so close as to be prevented from saying what I know. For the belief that some such vantage point is necessary for the writing of history I can plead the testimony of the greatest of English historians. Gibbon's authority is good enough.

In this belief, I have tried to make this book a record of days lived, not of things heard; of the march of events and the movement of ideas rather than of my own reactions to either. If a man does not come sufficiently to life in his own actions, his life must be poorly lived and certainly not worthy of record.

Chislehurst. DOUGLAS JERROLD.
June, 1937.

CHAPTER ONE

PRELUDE TO ADVENTURE

WE, too, have lived in Arcadia.

The Diamond Jubilee was the full meridian of the English glory, the last occasion on which the world paid us, as the wealthiest, the most secure, the most liberal and the most powerful among the great nations the united homage of its admiration, its envy and its cordial dislike. How like the Victorian age to get away with the credit as well as the cash, with the power as well as the glory. Not that minute little Victorians looking up at the Jubilee decorations from their windows tasted much of either, for there was no nonsense yet about emancipation in the nursery or self-expression for children, but we grew up in homes fortified and dignified by a long epoch of secure continuity.

It was this, not any particular length of days, which gave to those last Victorians who dominated our childhood the prestige of institutions. They are no doubt more meritorious who have begun life as errand boys or in log cabins, but life is far less interesting for their heirs, who have in such cases no inherited memories of the world into which they themselves are born. The heirs of such meritorious persons must start the battle of life afresh. No typical Victorian had to do that.

The Victorian family, whatever its position in the social hierarchy, had usually looked on life from the same vantage point for several generations. It felt itself an integral part of a real and apparently fixed society. It is silly to remind us, as some wiseacres do, that change was continuous throughout the Victorian as in our own age. As it happens it was not, but

if it had been, it would still be much beside the point. Times changed, but the Victorians did not. They all seemed to have been doing the same things in different circumstances for a hundred years. No wonder Kipling had to beat the big drum to warn them of the coming storm.

I remember that drum. Oh, the brave music. It was from the Cathedral Close at Lichfield that I watched the 1st Battalion of the King's Own, in scarlet and gold, leaving for the front in 1899. Our seats were in front of Mrs. Selwyn's House, and Mrs. Selwyn was ninety and had, I was told afterwards, seen Britsh troops leaving for Waterloo in 1815. She must have seen much else also, for she had gone out with her husband, Bishop Selwyn, when he was made first Primate of New Zealand in 1841, but she had lived in the Cathedral Close since 1868 when her husband had been installed as ninety-first bishop of Lichfield. Altogether a very Victorian old lady. But as my grandmother, still living then, had sat next to the Duke of Wellington at a meeting of Sir Robert Peel's cabinet in 1842, and as my own father (admittedly in his early youth) had shared a concierge with Robespierre (whom she described to him as "toujours très coquet") I was used to links with the past.

"Sharing a concierge with Robespierre" was, of course, just my father's way of putting it. He liked to tell the story thus, not otherwise, in order to watch the mental contortions of his audience. Was their history all wrong or was my father merely joking? Actually the mystery was easily explained. The concierge was eighty-six when my father as a schoolboy lived in Paris before the siege, and she had been seven when Robespierre was executed. In the first part of the story she had been the daughter, in the second part, the mother of the concierge, but all the same she bridged the generations, looking out from the same room at the bottom of the staircase on the Terror, the first Empire, two Monarchies, the Second Republic, and

the Second Empire, and she had, in fact, known Robespierre and had run errands for him, and could clearly describe his appearance and recall his mannerisms. I wish I had written down the full story; there were many and fairly detailed recollections—the style of his dress, his favourite colours, and so on. My father would sometimes, if the subject cropped up, let fall a casual remark as to Robespierre's preference for blue, or it may have been green or pink. "How do you know?" some one would ask, and then my father would explain in a matter-of-fact tone that some one who had seen a lot of Robespierre at the time had told him.

My grandmother's adventure, equally suspicious to the casual listener, was another curiosity. She was walking with her nurse in St. James's Park when a half-witted cripple—John Bean—fired at Queen Victoria. My grandmother was actually the only witness of this incident, except the nurse, but apparently Sir Robert Peel, who heard of it all from Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, a friend of Laman Blanchard's, drew the line at asking a nursemaid to attend a Cabinet meeting. So my grandmother was taken to Downing Street in state and into the Cabinet room, where she was given a chair on the right of the Duke and asked to tell what she had seen, while Laman Blanchard (like Mr. Arthur Henderson on a later occasion) waited outside on the mat. So did all the other women during the Queen's reign and that of her son. It was left to Miss Margaret Bondfield to be the second woman in our history (reigning sovereigns excepted) to attend a Cabinet meeting.

But as I watched the troops march past in the Close at Lichfield, my thoughts, at the mature age of six, were less on Wellington and Waterloo than on the future. Should I ever ride as fine and large a horse as the Colonel of the King's Own, and should I ever wear so splendid a coat? The answer to the first question was in the affirmative; to the second, alas, in the

negative. But my mother was not by temperament a militarist, and so my youthful questions went unspoken.

Lichfield was full of military occasions during the Boer War years, and as I remember Lord Roberts and Lord Wolseley riding together through the streets one exciting afternoon, I am ready for some ingenious psychologist to ascribe my since notorious anti-pacifist views to those early experiences of the glamour of war. For the sake of intellectual honesty I must refute the charge. Death laid a heavy toll on the battalion that went out from Lichfield, and my contemporary experience was dominated by children's parties which had a habit of being suddenly cancelled, and the people who were going to give them would next be seen in black. To us children these deaths in battle were a sombre mystery but, as I saw on looking at the beautiful 1918 war memorial the other day, many of the children who shared those disappointments with my sister and myself resolved the mystery for themselves a few years later. As I remember them, they were children as noisy and grubby as the rest of us, but evidently the Gods loved them.

It will be said that it required a wealthier or a much poorer childhood than mine to savour the authentic bouquet of late Victorian and early Edwardian England. It is easy and fashionable—interchangeable terms, perhaps, in the modern vocabulary—to picture the pre-war decades as a fool's paradise, a riot of luxury and elegant depravity contrasting with a grinding povery and a bitter social unrest. It is certainly true that Radical statesmen menaced our pleasures and Whigs and Tories combined to utter Cassandra-like warnings as to our sanity. It is more sensible to recall that there was no unemployment problem then as we know it now, and that the appalling figures of destitution issued by the Ministry of Health to-day had no parallel in late Victorian or Edwardian England. The trouble with all memories is that they are dominated by extremes, which alone we vividly recall. We have forgotten

the long prelude to the Georgian catastrophe, not because we were cynically indifferent to everything except our pleasure but because we had sufficient manhood to face the facts with at least the appearance of courage. For proof it is sufficient to compare the public resolution in the face of Kaiser Bill's vociferous challenge with the outbreak of hysteria recently caused by Signor Mussolini, Herr Hitler and General Franco. Bustle is not always a sign of courage. It was Germany, not England, who sent a gunboat to Agadir. But it was in the British Admiralty that the lights were lit during the fantastic Morocco crisis of January, 1937.

It is not, to be blunt, in the least true that the rich and fashionable in the pre-Georgian era were more undisciplined, more vulgar and more careless than they are to-day. If anything, the reverse. In particular, the line between the mondaine and the demi-mondaine was much sharper; one seldom met one's aunt and never one's sister at an Edwardian night club and the middle classes had not yet learnt to dance.

And there were other differences. When the first "respectable" dance club was formed, I think, in 1910, Randle Cecil christened it the "City and Suburban" and the description was held sufficiently damning. To-day it presents in three words the essential ingredients of a fashionable occasion. Stockbrokers and tradesmen then still aspired to join the mixed but not yet mythical, ranks of society, by the narrow if not straight path of politics. To-day the only social function of politics is to provide a channel of communication between Mayfair and Kensington and the Stock Exchange or Mincing Lane. The City used to be something which one left at five o'clock; to-day it is a place at which one "arrives." I have preferred to travel hopefully and so far my hope has been fulfilled. The only City address in my address-book is my tailor's, a fact which explains everything about me except my clothes.

The contrasts between wealth and poverty at the beginning of the century were more startling but infinitely less important than they are to-day. We have nothing to-day resembling the life of the great country houses which Vita Sackville West draws for us in *The Edwardians*. That life is gone for ever, and so has the foul extreme of poverty which disfigured the slums of our great cities. But these things were excrescences on the life of a nation predominately in regular employment, taking its colour from a vast, sober world of clever artisans, thrifty, liberal-minded and religious. It is fashionable to assume to-day that the thrift was mere meanness, the religion mere humbug and the regular wages mere starvation. But was the loud enthusiasm for liberalism which was the intellectual note of those unintellectual days just so much *blague*? Were the Whigs really playing a game with our childish loyalties? I refuse to admit it. I remember wandering into the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons on the day after the Lords had rejected Mr. Lloyd George's Budget of 1909 to hear Mr. Asquith give notice of his resolution condemning the action of the other House as unconstitutional. The House was packed from floor to ceiling, and the cheers when Mr. Asquith rose from his place lasted more than three minutes. I had been brought up in the Gladstonian tradition, and to me it was axiomatic that the voice of the House of Commons majority was the voice of God, and that of the Lords the voice of Satan. What was even more significant to me was the contrast between the Roman manner, four-square, resonant and uncompromising, and the Grecian, slim, dialectical, ingenious, suave, and shall we say, apparently insincere. I heard the two masters of these different manners on the second reading of the Veto Bill. It seemed impossible, as one majestic sentence followed another from the Treasury Bench, that any answer could be made to an argument so cold, so logical and so massive. When Mr. Balfour began, hesitant,

meandering, interrupted at every turn, it seemed impossible that anything could emerge from the web of dialectic which he was spinning out of nothing but a sense of loyalty to his new chief, Mr. Bonar Law. But at the end of each period, quite unexpectedly, by some astonishing *tour de force*, a point would be made, and, as much in relief as in appreciation, his supporters cheered while the ranks of Tuscany were momentarily silenced. Arthur Balfour would have had the contemporary House of Commons at his mercy. His rôle of the detached spectator thinking aloud would have appealed to our less logical age.

It was old age, not fidelity to old traditions, which disqualified Balfour from the leadership of the brave new world of 1918. In the simpler world of 1909 Balfour was wasted; he could carry everything except conviction, and it was an age of convictions. Toryism, as the creed of the governing classes, had no intellectual aspirations. It was interested not in principles but in the conduct of affairs, and if politics were for the people, affairs were still for the privileged. "Power," as John Adams said, "always follows property," and the attack on property had not yet begun. Enthusiastic schoolboys outside the charmed circle were thus left with grandiloquent liberal principles as the only possible focus for their political enthusiasms.

Because politics meant everything except business, political enthusiasms were higher and political passions more temperate than now. A bye-election result would sell out an edition of a paper, but the evening papers had a microscopic circulation. The "sea-green incorruptible," then at the height of its influence, never had, so Hugh Spender once told me, an assured circulation of more than 20,000 copies.

As schoolboys we even betted on bye-elections and felt exhilarated or depressed as our party won or lost. Equally symptomatic of a leisured age was the intense public enthusiasm for cricket, and the absence of any public interest at all

in football. Papers, like politics, were for the middle classes. Grace was past his prime then, but not so Charles Fry, Ranjitsinhji, Jessop, George Hirst and Hayward. For all its over emphasis, there was absent from the cricket news in those days the note of restrained hysteria and the still more obvious note of sophisticated sentiment which we find to-day. It was just a game which we, because we were Englishmen, played pre-eminently well. To-day it is a business, at which, because we are English, we are struggling against desperate odds to make both ends meet.

My most enduring impressions of a pre-Georgian childhood are of space, leisure and frugality. I was not old enough to realise that the first two are the results of the third. Leisure is a function of moderate means wisely managed. A rich class may be an idle class, it can never be leisured. It is as ridiculous to suppose that you can buy leisure as to dream that you can teach it. It is a bye-product of

"a certain code, a manner of birth,
A certain manner of knowing how to live"

of which the England of these days has lost the secret for lack of the necessary virtue. It is nothing more complicated than that.

My father's first London house was in Redcliffe Square, a square which was déclassé almost before it was built. It has indeed the distinction, I believe, of being the "last square," not only in geography but in point of time. We went there because it was cheap. Henrietta Bingham once gave me as her definition of social suicide, "landing in cotton" at New York. Living in Redcliffe Square must certainly have been the English equivalent in 1902. Our house had fourteen rooms, most of them very large, and has since been divided into six flats. I was offered the basement in 1919 at rather more than double the rent my father had paid in 1900 for the whole house. Unfortunately I could not afford it. The *pièce de resistance* of

this "desirable apartment" was the front sitting-room, which was, so the house-agent informed me, exceptionally large. Few young men in the post-war world, I was given to understand, could aspire to such dignity. It used to be the servants' sitting-room, a thing not provided in modern luxury flats.

The defect of the old style of living was that it took training, character and civilised taste to run a large house comfortably and bring up a family on an income of a few hundreds a year. Your dividend was in space and leisure, and not in kind or cash. To a generation incapable of sitting still, far less of reading, writing (except for profit) or talking, the rewards are disproportionate to the effort. The code required stringent economy and a real knowledge of housekeeping and home management. It depended also, if it were to be tolerable, on the existence of a large class of people similarly born and situated; people who were capable of being entertained by the exchange of views and impressions, interchangeable because they derived from a common culture, worth exchanging because they were the views of civilised and intelligent people. I make this point because the views which people love to exchange to-day are the fruit not of cultivated perception but merely of a naïve and irritating surprise. A young man runs short of money, and reaches the conclusion that the money system needs reform. Another discovers that a million people are out of work, and calls on "the State" to find work for them; a third discovers that his neighbour is a fool, and calls for a Ministry of Intelligence. No one disputes that the hearts of all these people are in the right place, but good talk depends on the head, and the deficiencies of the head have killed luncheon and dinner-parties and substituted cocktail parties, where boredom is sooner annihilated.

There is also the question of books. The great pre-Georgian domestic problem was to find room for books. They took up more room than the only modern necessities, a large divan and

a frigidaire. Modern furniture manufacturers have ceased even to make bookcases; you can only buy one second-hand.

If the loss of space, dignity and leisure had been the price paid for a genuine equality between all classes bought at the price of self-denial, I should still regret it. I believe that brains are a necessity, not a luxury, and that if you standardise the conditions you standardise the product. But it is certain that, as things are, the loss is absolute and wholly evil. A child growing up in a house "with all modern conveniences" can, if he is normal, have only one anxiety—to get away from it. We live to-day *au point du départ*, and the logical end of the resulting psychological twist is sterility and suicide. If we eat and drink sufficiently, we want to die. As a small child, I lived in large houses, always with a room of my own, a fact which no doubt accounts for the difference between myself and Virginia Woolf. Our normal evening's pleasure was reading, uninterrupted by any kind of noise. Cards were a rarity and never played on Sunday. "Going out" was the rare exception, not the rule. "Going away" was the first great adventure of the year; "coming home" was the second and greatest.

Every woman, as Clough observed, is or ought to be a cathedral, and every pre-Georgian home, however humble, was a museum. It bound its occupants to the past and gave them a sense of responsibility for its preservation in the future. The desk at which I am writing at the moment was Douglas Jerrold's, and I am sitting in his chair. No dealer would look twice at either, and the same is true, I feel sure, of all the things we had at Redcliffe Square. They had no date or style; they had no value at all in terms of this world's goods. We possessed nothing of the kind that is called in Fitzjohn's Avenue a good piece. But all our furniture had belonged to somebody, which leads me to think of another overwhelming advantage of the large house as the norm: it involved, for most people, an entire absence of ready money. Amusement and the spending

of money seem to-day to be inseparable: nothing becomes a necessity as quickly as a luxury. I can never remember my parents or my innumerable uncles and aunts doing anything habitually which cost money. The total disappearance of people who do not spend money (outside their own homes), of any kind of ordered or dignified life disassociated from public amusements, is a bad thing. Bohemian life (so called), which merely means the spending of money borrowed in unintelligent anticipation of the value of the borrower's artistic potentialities, has always existed, but the amount which the self-styled impecunious author or artist spends on drink and other amusements would have exhausted my father's allowance for his whole family for the year. I do not claim to be exempt from the modern taste for spending money, but I have inherited at least a tendency to regard "going-out" as an unusual, and to a certain extent an abnormal departure from routine, a habit which most people to-day find wholly inexplicable, but which is sufficiently strong to have kept me from doing more than contemplating the possibility of one day buying a car.

I see in the papers to-day a discussion of the problem of home-work for school-children. Home-work is again a problem of home room. Every day of my life since I was nine I have had work to do after dinner, and when conditions were tolerable, I have done it. Only when I was living in a small flat for a few years after the war did I find it intolerable. Probably that was no loss to the world, but the loss of the habit of reading and writing among a whole generation of girls and boys, whose parents are paying for an increasingly expensive education, is quite another matter. The habit of working alone is essential to any form of happiness (except what can be derived from the inheritance of a large unearned income), and it is a habit which must be formed early. I never remember regarding home-work as an infliction. The most I ever did was to put it on one side for an hour to read Henty (of whom my

mother disapproved on political grounds, as tending to militarism) and, at a slightly later stage, Sherlock Holmes and Raffles (of whom no one ever disapproved as tending to crime, thus providing another example of the characteristic Edwardian distinction between politics and practice).

That distinction between politics and practice dominates my childish recollection of the conversations of my elders and betters. All the "problems" which I heard discussed, which were wrangled over in school debating-societies and school magazines, were utterly remote from our lives and feelings. Chinese Slavery, Home Rule for Ireland, Welsh Disestablishment, Health Insurance—these things were interesting just as County Cricket was interesting. But every one's interest in them seemed purely esoteric. The poor law, whether moderately reformed by the Majority Report, or revolutionised by the Minority Report, was still a thing which affected a class which was still emphatically a minority. All Edwardian politics, broadly speaking, concerned minorities, whether rebellious, dissatisfied, or merely unfortunate. The Edwardians, rich or poor, drunk or sober, still looked after themselves. My father, prevented from active political work by his position as an official of the Local Government Board, was an enthusiastic Liberal, but he invariably defeated his political opponents in argument by proving conclusively that the effect of the particular proposal under discussion would be to alter nothing.

W. L. George used to take special pleasure in seeking out my father at the Savile (old style) at lunch, because he regarded him as the only authentic survival of the Second Empire. Enthusiasm for the Bonapartes was a family tradition. My father's sister, when a child in Paris, asked the Emperor for a signed photograph, and it arrived escorted by Cuirassiers in full uniform. The photograph is now in my study. That was in the sixties; afterwards my grandfather, Blanchard Jerrold,

wrote a four-volume life of Napoleon III, which has formed the basis of many biographies in the modern style, though only Philip Guedalla has acknowledged the debt. When my father paid his first visit to me at Chislehurst, he recalled that the last time he had visited the neighbourhood was to inquire after the Emperor, on the occasion of his last illness. Not that I can truthfully say that I sought Bonapartist traditions in going to Chislehurst. If I did, I should not find many. It would be difficult to say which would find modern Chislehurst least sympathetic—the Prince or the adventurer.

My father knew the world without being of it and so combined wisdom with taste. By religion Catholic, by taste aristocratic, by tradition Liberal, he was sympathetic to many of the "idées Napoléennes" and admired the brave effort to harmonize the incompatible which glittered over Europe for a few brilliant years before it petered out in the dull provincialism of the Third Republic. Equally at home in Liberal England, Catholic France or the Germany of the First Reich, my father encouraged no insular prejudices. I have never understood the belief (encouraged in professional Left-wing circles) that aggressive patriotism is a vice of the educated or the wealthy classes. The characteristic vice of the educated is scepticism; of the wealthy, avarice. Patriotism in its ugliest manifestations is the vice of democracy. To schoolboys all the world over, foreigners are funny, and the old tradition, still alive in my schooldays, that foreign languages should be taught by foreigners usually provided a good deal of evidence in support of this view. The tradition is, of course, absurd. It would be as sensible to have a foreigner as Foreign Secretary. Still, the succession of French and German masters whom I remember performed the essential service of preventing any of their pupils from ever being afraid of the French or the Germans. Since 1918, we have been in a dithering fear of both, intensified by the great increase in the number of people who (having been, I

imagine, taught by Englishmen) can now read French and German and can therefore understand the unfailingly irritating pronouncements of the statesmen of both these great nations.

No doubt the schoolboy's tendency to braggadaccio would have got the better of the Edwardian schoolboy if occasion had greatly provoked him, but foreigners were not much in the news between 1901 and 1910. The Russo-Japanese war aroused no partisanship. The action of the Russian Fleet in firing on our trawlers was the first international incident that excited any one since Fashoda but the excitement was only mild. War to an English schoolboy, as to his parents, was purely a method of settling our own colonial problems, a function of what was already ceasing to be known as imperialism. Whether we faced the problem or no was determined merely by the size of the necessary war. But as far as the Edwardian schoolboy was concerned our relations with foreign powers continued to be friendly, and the Army was safely back in scarlet long before I was old enough to appreciate the significance of this gesture. If it had any.

The Edwardian age was not a formative age. The crucial problems had not developed. The issues of the two Edwardian elections were Chinese Slavery and the Peers against the People. As for the Labour Party, it was a movement, not yet a political machine. As a schoolboy I used to see Keir Hardie going to Westminster in his cloth cap, and my mother used to meet Ramsay Macdonald at London dinner-parties wearing a red tie. As a nation of poets we like movements and distrust machines. It was exciting to meet a man in a red tie at a London party, but it was emphatically not dangerous. Labour still aspired to be "different," and as long as it was "different" it was not the alternative government. Indeed the view to which I was brought up was that the Labour men had hearts of gold, and men with hearts of gold are not dangerous political

opponents. If the public had, at that date, heard of the Webbs they might have been more alarmed, but only the political classes had been reached by the Fabian tracts, and only the intelligentsia by the plays of Bernard Shaw. This would mean everything to-day, because the political classes have seized control of the whole resources of the community, and the intelligentsia have bluffed their way into politics, but Edwardian England was still a non-political state, and the moral enthusiasm of Liberalism was fired not by a desire to extend but by a determination to restrict the powers of government. That freedom, freely given, would be wisely used was the fundamental axiom. It was a religion rather than a policy, and it was this fact which explains the conviction, seriously held even by intelligent people, that every opposition to liberal policy was prompted by interest. How the liberal doctrine of natural wisdom could be harmonised with the Christian doctrine of original sin was not a problem to which either schoolboys or their parents devoted attention.

But if Liberalism was a religion rather than a policy, religion as I knew it was a practice rather than a philosophy. I have never forgotten being rebuked, as a very small boy, rather mildly, for being late for early Mass on Sunday. I gave as my answer, in all good faith, the delay occasioned by the necessity of saying my prayers. It had not occurred to me that prayer and going to Church had any connection. Church was an "extra" which happened on Sunday, and it would, in my simple opinion, have been rank cheating, to have achieved punctuality by scrapping my prayers. That prayers, either inside or outside Church, had any connection with one's works and days was an idea remote from my youthful consciousness. I don't know whether I am to be congratulated upon the absence of what a (since converted) friend used to call the "indulgence selling mentality" or pitied for an absence of

natural piety, but, it is recorded that I once gave "Going to Church" as the answer to a catechist's request to define "mortification."

It was, indeed, very far from fashionable among Catholics in those days to suggest that Catholicism entailed any specific view of social or political questions. This was characteristic of the Edwardian detachment. Just as my father's generation always defended the Liberal Party by proving that they would assuredly leave the world very much as they had found it, so they defended the good citizenship of Catholics on the ground that in secular matters they were just as other men. With such almost quixotic loyalty did English Catholics repay centuries of persecution. The excellent people who complain that Herr Hitler has limited the number of Jewish students in Universities to a percentage proportionate to the Semitic population do not seem to realise that it is only in the lifetime of men still living that Catholics have been admitted to English universities at all, and I was talking only the other day to a neighbour whose grandfather had been forced to sell a valuable horse for £5 because he attended Mass. This was because practising Catholics were not allowed a century ago to own any property exceeding £5 in value. These things were done in England from the days of Cromwell in the name of enlightened progress, and differ in no way from the results of the doctrines of totalitarianism. Persecution is always vile, and the English record of persecution, from the days of Henry VIII to the days of the conscientious objectors and the Black-and-Tans, is particularly nauseating because it has been accompanied by a consistent output of high moral sentiment on the part of the persecutors. We have never, in fact, hesitated to impose our will by force upon helpless minorities, and the latest victim of the Liberal persecution is the infinitesimal fascist minority, whose moral courage is only equalled by their political imbecility. Unfortunately, like the sixteenth and seventeenth

century Catholics, they have occasionally hit back, a thing which Englishmen seldom forgive.

I have lived, thank God, to see the beginning of a Catholic revival in England. I am much less thankful to have lived into an age when my faith is becoming almost as fashionable as the doctrines of the popular Front. The history of the world is the history of the Opposition, and the Opposition is usually right. Nevertheless, as a Georgian, I have much to be thankful for. Edwardian children, when they came to face their problems, were much better equipped for them than their successors will be. They were fortunate enough to be born before modern theories of education became popular. The boys of my generation—I am less certain about the girls—were taught to read and write almost as soon as they could walk and were set hard at work from the age of seven or eight. We were not encouraged to "express ourselves," to write poems or to draw and paint, but to learn Latin and Greek, and Geometry and Algebra and French Grammar and a subject vaguely called "English." My private school was in South Kensington—where indeed, I fancy it still is—and we used to play what we imagined to be cricket and football at Wormwood Scrubbs and later on at Acton. Oddly enough I don't recollect any enthusiasm for games on the part of either the masters or the boys. The ordinary schoolboy, large or small, when left to himself prefers energy to skill. It is the spectator, not the player, who creates the team spirit, because the spectator wants to gratify his egotism by identifying himself with the victory of the team he supports. I cannot recollect caring tuppence whether my own private school defeated another (a rare event when I played for it), or was beaten, and as no one was looking on, no one else cared either. This was certainly not the "right spirit" judged by public-school standards, but neither was the "right spirit" unchallenged in Edwardian public schools.

More, however, of that later. I am trying to draw in faint

black and white a background to my Georgian adventure. Every one's background is different, but as it recedes, the common experience is what remains, because it has coloured the shape of things to come. I shall be told by those who know everything about every one that my career, my views and my experience, my world and my actions in it, were really determined by the fact that I was two years younger than my sister, had a big nose and an ugly face, and was rather frightened of my mother. But all this might have happened in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the results would have been wholly different in a different age. The important thing is that in Edwardian England private people still had private lives. My parents belonged essentially to no group, no "set," no church, no class. They were not members of the bureaucracy, nor of "society," neither were they apostles of Catholic action or members of the middle-class defence organisation.

The detachment characteristic of the period was intensified in my father's case by character and circumstance. I have by me as I write, letters from most of the great literary figures of the eighteen-thirties and of the early and middle Victorian period—Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Landor, Dickens, Thackeray, Browning, Foster, Tom Taylor, Harrison Ainsworth, Bulwer Lytton—but these were the friends of my grandfather, Blanchard Jerrold, or of my great-grandfathers, Douglas Jerrold and Laman Blanchard. Both my great-grandfathers on the Jerrold side were men with a genius for friendship. The result was that my father's stories of great men and famous occasions carried him back to an incredibly distant past. He had never known Meredith or Hardy, but he had scores of first-hand stories about Leigh Hunt and Dickens, Thackeray and Laman Blanchard and some about Douglas Jerrold himself.

Like every great wit, Douglas Jerrold was a sentimentalist

at heart; a fact which Dickens, who was a sentimentalist by profession, never forgave, and D. J. never forgot. I have in my study an amusing engraving of Dickens reading *The Christmas Carol* to a group of admirers, including Forster, Tom Taylor, Carlyle, Macready and others. On a sofa apart are Douglas Jerrold and Laman Blanchard; Blanchard looking polite but intensely bored, and Douglas Jerrold looking up at the ceiling with an expression of uncompromising regret. This engraving, if faithful to the occasion, suggests that the reviewing racket is older than we think it, for I happen to have letters from Dickens to both my great-grandfathers thanking them enthusiastically for exceptionally favourable reviews of the *Carol.* Dickens's statement in his letter to Blanchard, "you meant to give me great pleasure and you have done it," is a franker expression of the ideal relation between author and reviewer than is common to-day. He strikes much the same note in his letter to Douglas Jerrold when he speaks of "that affectionate mention of the *Carol*," and assures him that "it was not lost upon the distant object of your manly regard but touched him as you wished and meant it should." Nor was there lacking a clear hope for further favourable reviews and a regret for lost opportunities in the past; "I wish we had not lost so much time in improving our personal knowledge of each other."

Recent revelations and the difference in manners alike lend a curious interest to Dickens's reference to his wife in this letter. After asking Jerrold and his wife to come and stay for Christmas, Dickens goes on, "I will warrant my wife to you as a gentle little woman and as free from affectation and formality of every kind as ever breathed." All this is followed by a characteristic description of Venice in the best Early Victorian style:

"I have never in my life been so struck by any place as

by Venice. It is the wonder of the world; dreamy, beautiful, inconsistent, impossible, wicked, shadowy, damnable old place. I entered it by night and the sensation of that night, and the bright morning that followed, is a part of me for the rest of my existence. And, oh, God, the cells close the water underneath the Bridge of Sighs—the nook where the monk came at midnight to confess the political offender—the trench where he was strangled—the deadly little vault in which they tied him in a sack and the stealthy, crouching little door through which they hurried him into a boat, and bore him away to sink him where no fisherman dare cast his net—all done by torches that blink and wink as if they are ashamed to look upon the gloomy theatre of such horrors; past and gone as they are—these things still stir a man's blood like a great wrong or passion of the instant. With them in their minds, and with the museum there, having a chamber full of such frightful instruments as the Devil in a brain fever could scarcely invent, there are hundreds of parrots who will declaim in speech and print by the hour together on the degeneracy of the times in which a railroad is building across the water to Venice instead of going down upon their knees, the drivellers, and thanking heaven that they live in a time when iron makes roads instead of prison bars and engines for driving screws into the skulls of innocent men. Before God! I could almost turn bloody minded and shoot the Parrots of our island, with as little compunction as Robinson Crusoe shot the parrots in his——!

Clearly Dickens was enjoying himself.

In a letter to Jerrold from Lausanne, Dickens strikes a pleasanter note. Again it is an invitation (perhaps another book was coming out) but there is cheerful mention of "Bowers of roses for cigar smoking, arbours for cool punch-drinking,

mountain and Tyrolean countries close at hand, piled up Alps before the windows, etc. etc."[1]

Another grateful author was Bulwer Lytton, or Edward Lytton Bulwer as he then was, who wrote to thank Laman Blanchard for a review of *The Last Days of Pompeii*. "I am sincerely grateful for the feeling," he writes, "better than the praise, from which your praise took its source." More rose-leaves from the Victorian sachet. Then follows a complaint unfamiliar to our prosaic age, for Bulwer suspects "that art is wasted upon prose fictions, for art is not appreciated now and prose is a very doubtful material for the artist to leave behind . . . the prose of one generation is prosy to the next. Alas, poor Richardson."

Alas, also, poor Bulwer, for who reads him to-day? But who will blame the medium rather than the man? Bulwer had a curiously uneasy vanity, for in another letter to Blanchard (after another review, apparently the only good one he had had, he writes querulously, wondering "whether I shall ever in my own person find some portion of that unenvying and uncarping justice which I have rendered to rival contemporaries." The great mass of the Bulwer letters that I have deal with grievances of one kind or another, including one about a copyright, at interminable length. I can only guess that Bulwer was one of the earliest victims of what publishers call the "author complex."

Most of my father's recollections of this now-distant past

[1] The letter gives incidentally a very interesting table of times and prices for the journey from Ostend to Lausanne in 1846. The account (excluding bed and board on the road) stands thus from Ostend.

	Time days	Money francs
To Cologne	1	27
To Coblentz	1½	22
To Mannheim	1½	
To Kehl and Strassbourg, and thence to Bâle	1	31
Omnibus additional..	—	1
To Lausanne	1	26
	5 days	107 francs

came from his mother, Laman Blanchard's daughter. Owing to his wife's long illness, Laman Blanchard made a great companion of his daughter, taking her out when she was still in her 'teens. She was pretty, dark and vivacious, according to a picture which I have of her, by Fanny Corbeaux, and she had a fine mezzo-soprano voice. Thackeray was as fond of her as if she had been his own daughter; he used to call her "the lovely young Lavinia" (in allusion to a line of the poet Thomson's) and this he often shortened to "Lovely young." He especially delighted in her singing and a favourite song of his was one called "Ruth," by a composer now forgotten. One day, after my grandmother had married, she was standing looking into a shop-window in Piccadilly when she heard some one over her shoulder gently humming, "Thy people shall be my people." She looked round with a start and saw Thackeray's grave face. Without a smile or a greeting he said very quietly, "Tell William I shall be at the Reform all to-morrow afternoon," and departed. Such whimsical moodiness was according to her very characteristic of him. I have a letter of his to my great-grandfather, Laman Blanchard, with the postmark, 21st April, 1843, saying, ". . . I have sent by the parcels company the book, all but the last sheet, to the *Examiner* to be forwarded to you. It is dedicated to Mr. Lever, and the author will say in the Preface that it was to have been called *The Cockney in Ireland*, but for the pathetic remonstrances of the publishers. And so God speed it.

"Ever yours,

"AMELIA.

"I shall be in the Linden Grove at the rising of the moon, and you will know me by the cherry-coloured ribbon tied round the tail of my dog."

A wise pundit from one of our Universities was once looking through my grandmother's autograph-book wherein

the letter was sewn. He looked at it carefully and then said with decision, "That is not by Thackeray at all. It is not his handwriting nor style." My father then told him the story, as his mother had related it to him: how Laman Blanchard had received the letter at breakfast, laughed over the postscript and tossed it over to his daughter, saying, "Here's an amusing letter from Thackeray for your book." But our wise pundit was adamant; an excellent exemplar of the Higher Criticism.

When still almost a child, my grandmother was taken by Browning to see Edmund Kean in *Hamlet*. She remembered her host rather better than the play, for he had delighted her by his talk, even though she hadn't understood everything he said. One story of which she did not quite see the point was that of the lady who asked the poet whereabouts was the Shelley Plain which he had mentioned in one of his poems. A later recollection of Browning was not so pleasant. After her marriage she met him at a dinner party and reminded him of their former meeting and of his kindness to her, to which he replied in a very off-hand manner, "But I was nobody then." This is reminiscent of the Browning of whom Tennyson said that he "would die choked by a white tie."

My grandmother used sometimes to go to the William Godwins' house; she remembered Mary Shelley sitting there, quiet and somewhat aloof, and altogether she had a gloomy recollection of these visits. She also went frequently to the William Hazlitts'. My father remembered Hazlitt as an old man who used to visit them occasionally, and when he came, he always brought some present from his house—a cut-glass decanter, some books, and once he arrived with a big clumsy parcel which contained a number of fine old hock glasses.

Among others whom my grandmother remembered was Leigh Hunt who was not only a persistent but an unctuous borrower. Once, apologising for not writing, he assures Laman Blanchard :

"I have thought of you a hundred times. The truth is that since hearing from you (which is the reason I did not send again) I have received some money, out of which I was very desirous of rescuing the amount of what you were so kind as to oblige me with, in order that I might cut a very great figure by anticipating my promised day of payment. Alas! After all, I cannot do it. The pounds vanish from my hands, almost as if they had not been; and I am still left struggling, though relieved. Under these circumstances I will continue your debtor till the time mentioned and most assuredly shall not be at all impatient of the debt as an obligation for it is a genuine pleasure (let who will, say to the contrary) to be obliged by a genuine friend, and one who could write as you did about it; but we are neither of us rich; and the only thing which made me loth to ask the money, makes me anxious to return it."

Every line of that might have been given to Skimpole in *Bleak House*, a portrait which Dicken's enemies denounce as a caricature. The evidence for once is all on Dickens's side.

Many of these old letters are invitations to readings of plays or poems. This Victorian habit must have been, I should imagine, a decided embarrassment. It seems, however, to have been part of the literary racket of the day and presumably the heart-felt tributes—valuable only for the sentiments which inspired them—would have been withheld from habitual absentees from these gatherings. Only occasionally have these interest, but the faded scrawl in the corner of an invitation from Leigh Hunt to my great-grandfather, Laman Blanchard —"Carlyle will be here"—gives me a curious feeling of excitement. I had not thought of Carlyle somehow as a lion in the reign of William IV.

A letter of Barry Cornwall's to Laman Blanchard is however a reminder that these eminent Victorians began their life amid decidedly un-Victorian customs. Dated 13 March, 1829, the

letter conveys the writer's readiness to join in a dinner to the famous actor Macready but adds :

"I cannot be one of those who will doubtless be found under the table at 4 a.m. (as I understand was the case upon a late occasion."

About the same date is a letter from Macready himself to Blanchard asking him to come and listen to the new play, about which the actor was uncertain, so :

"Will you submit to take 'a seat on the bench' at three o'clock, and afterwards at the table at six."

The play, according to a note of Blanchard's on the letter, was Bulwer's *Richelieu*. In this case the fame of the play must have exceeded even Lytton's expectations, as it is still a favourite for gala performances, if only because of the number of the characters suitable for the accommodation of famous stars.

Apart from the "Amelia" letter, I find no trace of Thackeray among any of my papers. He lived in a less Bohemian world, passing his days between the Reform and the Athenæum, writing a page or two at one club and then leaving angrily for the other, in search of inspiration. My grandfather Blanchard Jerrold had, however, what must surely be the best story of that snob among litterateurs and man of letters among snobs. He met Thackeray on the steps of the Reform Club on the morning following the death of the Prince Consort and made some conventional remark on the sad news. Thackeray remained silent for a full half-minute; then, drawing himself up to his full height, said solemnly:

"Alas! Poor gentlewoman."

My father's early years were spent in Paris, and when the family returned to London after the Franco-Prussian war, they returned to a new generation of writers. Dickens and Thackeray were dead, and my grandfather Blanchard, who had succeeded Douglas Jerrold as editor of *Lloyd's Weekly News*, was interested professionally in letters but personally in politics.

By tradition a Liberal, by temperament a Whig, he had no part in the new movement which had begun to stir the face of the Victorian waters, while of early Victorian radicalism he retained only an undogmatic atheism. Copyright was Blanchard Jerrold's hobby and I find an interesting letter to him from Mr. Gladstone disclaiming "the character of a literary man, as my title to bear that character might perhaps be questioned." The signature, "yours very faithfully and obediently," recalls a better and more mannered age, already drawing to a close. For me it closes with Blanchard Jerrold's death in 1884 at the early age of 58.

It is curious to have to record that the age with which from my childhood up I was most familiar, closed nine years before I was born. But it is true. My father's many stories of the early and mid-Victorian writers provided me not only with those early memories which form the starting-ground of a boy's conscious thinking, but they inevitably influenced the books I asked permission to read. How many boys of my generation read not only Dickens and Thackeray but Harrison Ainsworth and Bulwer Lytton? These men were real to me and even to-day I find it difficult to realise that they were born much more than a hundred years ago. The whole effect was accentuated by the sudden break in the family association with the world of letters. Had my grandfather lived to a normal age he would have seen the end of the century, and my father would not have been obliged to take a post under the Local Government Board. The only thing which reconciled my father to this step was the reflection that his appointment was at any rate a sound eighteenth century political job. But it took him away from the Bar, where he had begun to practice, and away from London, and beyond a text-book on copyright (a family interest) and the translation into English of Turgenieff's *First Love* (the first of Turgenieff to appear in this country), he never put pen to paper again till the day of his

death, and never frequented any literary society. He never even joined a London club until persuaded into the Savile by Charles Brookfield shortly before the war.

The inevitable result of all this was that I grew up in unusual detachment from the contemporary world, that it possessed for me an air of unreality which to this day it has never wholly lost. Which perhaps is why I am telling this story, for although wholly mine, I feel it to concern only a part of me. The other part has been an onlooker, and has seen perhaps more of the game.

CHAPTER TWO

SHADES OF THE PRISON HOUSE

WESTMINSTER was the last school to preserve the early eighteenth century public school traditions. It was a poor man's school; it was not assimilated to the Arnold pattern; it never became a boarding school; its curriculum was, on the classical side, almost unchanged since the days of its great seventeenth century headmaster, Busby. After the age of fourteen, I "gave up" mathematics, and after the age of fifteen modern languages as well. Modern history was not even taught till 1910 and then only in the "History Sixth" under conditions which failed to combine instruction with amusement. The form played, however, very tolerable Bridge, for an age which knew not Culbertson.

If I pass over briefly the years when I was scuttling like a very frightened rabbit through the lower forms of the school, it is not out of any disrespect to the masters who taught them. H. F. Fox was my first house master and my first form master, but I remember only one shattering detonation produced by my failure to walk into one of his booby traps with becoming humility. He had the deepest voice I have ever heard, and I can hardly think I was the only boy who was frightened out of his wits by it. "If you were a trifle less conceited," he roared, "you would stand a chance of being bottom but one of this form instead of bottom." To any one who knew the excellent Mr. Fox it is unnecessary to add that I passed out first a fortnight later. Fox was born unlucky.

The only person he disliked more than he disliked me, because I was small and frightened, was Gustav Hamel, because

he was large and didn't care a damn. By nature a pioneer with a genius for mechanics, he arrived late every other morning with the excuse that his motor car had broken down, and the form's periodic amusement was to deposit a collection of old junk in some conspicuous place on the floor, and when asked what it was to reply, "I think it must be a piece of Hamel's motor car, sir." Hamel in any other school would have been superannuated: as it was he was reputed to have been in Fox's form since the death of Queen Victoria, but this was probably an exaggeration. His star turn was at Latin verse; for some reason which I cannot guess, we always had to translate at least twice a term a poem which contained the lines :

"Before him like a blood red flag
The bright flamingoes flew."

and every time Hamel, reading out this masterpiece, would produce "before him like a bloody flag." Since Bernard Shaw had not yet introduced the epithet to the middle classes the effect was as intended. Hamel was the first of my contemporaries to achieve fame, and his name was on every poster long before I left school. Like most adventurers he was not a remarkable athlete, nor handicapped by the team spirit. Physically, he was pure Viking, very tall, very broad, with fair curly hair. He disappeared in a cloudless sky on a June afternoon in 1914, not having worn his honours out.

From Fox I passed on to another remarkable if equally irrelevant personality—the Rev. G. H. Nall, author of a devastating primer on Greek sentences which must have depressed many generations of boys, and of several books on fly-fishing which are, I believe, classics in their field. Nall was reputedly a cynic; he certainly had a strong sense of humour. I remember his form because it was there that I was introduced to the Eclogues. I suppose that even then I must have ap-

preciated them, because I remember Nall asking me to read a passage again. I was puzzled, and suspected some false quantities, so I tried it again with some variants. "You did not understand," he commented drily, "I asked you to read it again because you read it well: had you read it as badly as you have done just now, I should not have troubled about it."

I spent two terms with Nall, to Fox's great annoyance. He regarded Nall as having succeeded, where he had failed, in putting me in my place. I was more fortunate with my third master, A. G. S. Raynor, also a parson and the Master of the King's Scholars. He had by custom or statute a privileged position, since the Headmaster was not allowed to enter College except as a guest, although by some curious anomaly, he gave an annual sum in the form of a credit account at the Army and Naval Stores, with which the Captain of the resident K.SS., usually the Captain of the School, supplemented the boy's utterly inadequate ration of free food with sausages and jam in unhygenic quantities. There was a lot of rather cheap-jack secrecy about this and other College customs which served, and was perhaps designed, to redress the handicap under which College laboured in the eyes of the rest of the school through being composed exclusively of boys reputed to be "clever." As a non-resident scholar I was not initiated into these Eleusinian mysteries, though I had to wear the same gown, white tie and mortar-board, a sombre costume, dating, I believe, from the seventeenth century. The only boy who ever looked impressive in this outfit was Robin Barrington-Ward, whose more than Roman gravity dominated Westminster in my third year. His leading articles in the School magazine already pointed clearly to Printing House Square.

Raynor was rotund and irrepressible: he was the noisiest teacher I ever came across, but he had more bounce than ballast. He was very easily excited about nothing. He incurred my displeasure later by his professed ignorance, possibly

assumed for my benefit, though I greatly doubt it, of the works of Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, but as a form master I remember nothing except his mannerisms. Born in another walk of life he would have been a drill instructor at Chelsea, because he had the rare and indispensable gift of treating every trivial and familiar mistake as if it were a new crime of a character so shocking and surprising as to lead him to despair of the whole future of mankind. His form was the last hurdle on the road to the sixth, and the theory was, I believe, that if you could survive Raynor's nerve-racking discipline with your nerves intact and your interest in the classics unimpaired, your path in life was likely to be relatively smooth. How I escaped from what was to me a simple inferno of noise I never knew; I was, according to my monthly reports, slipshod, idle and ignorant, but I suppose I offered no attractions either as a pupil or a butt and so was passed on as quickly as possible at a fortunately early age to come under the influence of one of the two dominating personalities in the Westminster of 1900-1920.

John Sargeaunt was perhaps the last of the very great assistant masters who remained such because they had a vocation as well as a genius for teaching. He had been President of the Oxford Union in Lord Curzon's time, and would not have agreed with Mr. Baldwin that oratory was the harlot of the arts. He was a distinguished Latinist, with little interest in Greek, and a knowledge of it which was, I fancy, by no means exceptional. But his passion was for English history and English literature of the Augustan and later ages. H. W. Massingham told me once that Sargeaunt's general knowledge of English Literature was in his view equalled only by Mr. Asquith's. That does not mean what it would mean to-day—a familiarity with aesthetic theories and with the works of contemporary minor poets. Literature to John Sargeaunt meant what it did to Dr. Johnson—the noblest expression of the views

and emotions of educated men of the the world, on the life of this world and the next. And the function of the teacher was to him what it was to Matthew Arnold—"a disinterested endeavour to learn and to propagate the best that is known and thought." The best usually meant Horace, Catullus or Virgil, or Dr. Johnson, Dryden or Milton. Yet his favourite poems, judged by the frequency with which they figured in his repertoire, were Cory's *Heraclitus* and Tennyson's less well-known lines on Catullus's Sirmio. A familiarity with the great classics of literature had been a necessary part of a gentleman's education in the eighteenth century, and John Sargeaunt saw no reason why, in an age of progess, the necessity should be any less.

His method of teaching was simplicity itself. He just talked, and talked so well that he could hold the attention of some thirty boys of very ill-assorted ages for an hour and sometimes nearly two hours on end. He left of his scholarship, which was wide and humane rather than critical, an edition of Dryden and a school-book or two; of his enthusiasm and eloquence, only a memory, though a memory sufficiently vivid to inspire a leading article in the *Times* on his death at a comparatively early age in 1922. He was tall and wizened, with long arms with which he gesticulated freely in declaiming favourite passages in Latin or English when they suited the theme of the moment. He was a pure Augustan in temper. He never gratified the taste of the curious for unconventional judgments. Like John Morley he was held captive by the sublime commonplaces and never looked beyond them for inspiration. When he talked he was, quite literally, inspired. He lost himself in the majesty of noble sentiments nobly expressed and attained an eloquence quite foreign to his individual personality. And he used this gift in teaching. I remember his quoting some passage, probably "the angel of death is abroad in the land" and asking the newcomers to his form who had spoken it.

No one answering, he declaimed suddenly: "How quickly do memories perish: how soon do we forget the name and the services of. . . ."

What name could fill that cadence but John Bright? And he got his answer from the sub-conscious memory of a boy who had, I am convinced, never consciously heard of the great orator in his life.

He never repeated himself. At least, I sat under him for five terms and never heard him do so. But he was never tired of repeating great poetry. On the first Spring day he would always go across to the window and look out on the sunshine and declaim to the heedless world:

> "Ver jam rediit, ver canorum, ver renatus orbis est;
> Cras amet qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit,
> cras amet."

He would end with the guarded comment, "a fine tripping metre."

But then nothing to John Sargeaunt compared with the Virgilian hexameter except the Miltonic blank verse line. He had a theory that the Westminster Latin pronunciation, by preserving the conflict between stress and quantity, was essential to the appreciation of the Virgilian cadences.

To illustrate his theory Sargeaunt had translated the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus into English quantitative hexameters, of which unfortunately I can remember only two lines from the famous passage which Carteret, himself an old Westminster, quoted on his death bed in 1763.

> "Nor would I myself be ever in the front of the fighting
> Nor would I send thee to the fight where men win
> glory."

But he preferred to quote as perfect examples of the conflict

between stress and metre, characteristic of the great Latin poets, Milton's

"Passion and apathy, and glory and shame,"

or

"Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides
And Teiresias and Phineus, prophets old."

and would probably clinch his point by quoting Jupiter's curse from Virgil

"pugnent ipsique, nepotesque."

a majestic sentence reduced to ignominious bathos unless the voice stress falls, as it does under the Westminster rules, on the first syllable of the first and last words. Or he might take that tragic phrase which Catullus tore out of his heart:

"qui me unum atque unicum amicum habuit"

or the passionate protest wrung from Aeneas by Dido's eloquence:

"Italiam non sponte sequor"

a cry which finds an echo in the hearts of so many pledged to unpopular causes, a cry, however, which becomes a meaningless jingle if the stress is allowed to follow the quantity.

But the point would not be swiftly made. At every turn there would be a digression into history or reminiscence. Sargeaunt's own version of the Homeric hexameters might lead him, by way of Dryden to Matthew Arnold *via* his essay on the translation of Homer. In that case, if we were lucky, we should get, prompted by the memory of the worst lines of *Balder Dead*, a discourse on the essentials of epic poetry which might last out the morning. But again, it might not, for the worst lines in *Balder Dead* would have been easy to beat in almost any poem of Alfred Austin, and we might have fun, instead of eloquence, with the worst lines from the whole *corpus* of English poetry, with a few, I fear, apocryphal additions. At least I have never been able to trace Alfred Austin's

"The winter is passing and over,
The lilacs grow mauver and mauver."[1]

in any authorised edition, though the late Basil Macdonald Hastings placed me in this as in other ways much in his debt by introducing me to Austin's poem on the *Siege of Mafeking* which really contained the wholly precious lines:

"They did not know what blench meant,
They stayed in their entrenchment"

lines which had escaped Sargeaunt, else we must have heard them often.

And then the worst lines would almost certainly have taken us either to the best lines in poetry—when he would put in a plea for Horatio's

"Absent thee from felicity awhile."

or to the most famous lines from little-known poets.

"A rose-red city, half as old as time"

or

"Too fair to worship, too divine to love"

(an excellent definition of unattainable imperfection) were favourites; but by that time the bell would go and we might or might not be dismissed at once. In any case, after the break, we would return and be asked to work backwards from where we left off to where we began.

Sargeaunt was at Westminster from 1890 to the end of 1918. I still regret that he died four months before the fall of Mr. Lloyd George's government, but am glad to think that he never lived to read Mr. Lloyd George's comment on his years of office, years which laid the seeds of so much disaster and suffering and lowered so fatally the prestige of democratic institutions throughout the once civilized world. The comment has attracted less notice than it deserves and must be quoted as it stands in Lord Riddell's diaries:

[1] I see that Lady Horner gives another version of this in her *Time Remembered*, but with the same sad doubts

R.—It is a romantic moment . . . it might well be to touch on that in your speech.

L.G. (making a note)—Yes.

Then he got up and walked about the room and put out his hand. I said "It has been a wonderful time." He said, "Yes—it has been a wonderful time."

Not thus did the great Augustans discourse of fate and chance and change in human life.

I did not belong to a distinguished generation at Westminster. The great came before, and no doubt, since progress is the rule, the greatest after me. The most distinguished figure in the Sixth of my time was then, as to-day, Adrian Boult. He looked much older then, but there was something in the atmosphere of Westminster which made us grow up quickly—another legacy of the eighteenth century tradition. Another contemporary whom I recall was H. S. Doherty, now a headmaster but then noted chiefly as a cousin of the famous tennis players. Lawn tennis, however, had not become a public spectacle: you did not see "Doherty's heroic effort" on the posters all over London. Cricket was the only national game which achieved the dignity of a mention on the posters of reputable papers, and H. S. Doherty's vicarious fame was much less than that of a cynical friend of mine who posed as the nephew of a famous cricketing peer to whom he was in no way related. He invented the relationship not to impress us, but to impress his housemaster, who asked after his uncle with regularity for four years. H— had evidently a natural bent for story-telling: he has since become a distinguished meteorological expert.

Most successful of my early contemporaries was J. C. C. Davidson whose talents showed themselves already in an ability, rare among schoolboys, for getting where he wanted to get without any particular effort, and, as it seemed to foolish youth, for no particular reason. We had not yet learnt that the management of affairs is of more importance than their

conduct, and the management of men more important than either. When I first went to Westminster, Davidson was one of the monitors of my house—Ashburnham, more famous for the Grinling Gibbons ceiling than for any other associations. The head of the house, D. J. Jardine, is now, so Davidson told me recently, Governor of Borneo. He could not govern it better than he governed Ashburnham in the consulship of Plancus. His successors in this grave task were W. B. Harris, brother of the famous S. S. Harris, the most elegant footballer of our time, and D. M. Low, the biographer of Gibbon. W. B. Harris had as natural a gift for the game as his brother, and was equally spectacular as outside left or in goal, but he had in those days a slender physique, and though he got his blue at Cambridge, he never, to my knowledge, played in "big" football. I am not by nature a games worshipper, and Association football to-day is so over-run by commercialism that it has lost even the savour of sport, but I can still remember with pleasure one match where S. S. and W. B. Harris played inside and outside left and gave an exhibition which for sheer virtuosity was astonishing to watch. Another billiant footballer who inspired to every kind of flattery except imitation was our games master, the Corinthian footballer and Kent cricketer, S. H. Day, though the most astonishing spectacle to which he treated his Westminster audience was not on the football field but in Dean Yard. To say that he walked across the yard to his classroom would have been inaccurate. To say that he reeled across would be a libel on a very distinguished performance in the art of being "different." It always reminds me of an actor friend of mine who went into a chemist's shop late one night to ask for two pills. The assistant asked if he would like them in a box. "Don't trouble," replied B——, "I'll roll them home."

W. B. Harris has since taken over his brother's famous private school in Sussex and carries on a distinguished tradi-

tion. Whether he supplies the public schools of his choice with as many ready-made athletes as did S. S. in the days when I was a schoolboy I cannot say, but he will not better his brother's success in turning out boys who grew up into men. If he equals it he will be lucky.

The great days of Westminster football were already in the past when I was a schoolboy. The only school matches played were with Charterhouse and Winchester, and both were usually lost. I don't recollect that anybody cared. Westminster in my day put a very negative interpretation on Sir Henry Newbolt's doctrine that the true public schoolboy should love the game beyond the prize. Playing to win was unknown! There was as much excitement as in any other school over the distribution of colours, and a fairly desperate anxiety to get into the various house and school elevens, but once you had got your colours, interest evaporated.

When it came to games which earned no colours, there was as much interest as there is in the Conservative Central Office on questions of Conservative principles. Ask a boy in my time to row, or to fence, to play fives or to box (all more or less unrecognised sports for which no colours were given) and you soon found out that nothing for nothing was his motto. As with games, so with work. Some enthusiast started a literary society in my first year, which, in a fit of youthful zeal, I joined as soon as my sixth form rank made me eligible. In due course I became president of it, or what was left of it. When I mentioned to the Headmaster that it seemed to be moribund, he replied instantly : "Naturally. None of the boys know what literature is. You can't make bricks without straw." It did not, I gathered, occur to him that in his capacity as a straw merchant the entire absence of that commodity was not exactly to his credit.

The Rev. James Gow, Litt.D. was certainly a "frank and fearless" personality. And it was not only in that respect that

he resembled a Gollancz novelist of the present day. Always on the popular side, he got a great reputation for shrewdness and courage by the unfailing bluntness with which he attacked losing causes and unpopular people. Learning for learning's sake was the last thing in the world that he respected. Learning was a necessary aid to success in life, but would, in his view, only conduce to that all-embracing end if it was regarded with a certain cynicism. I was four years in the school before I ever spoke to him, and most day boys came and went without doing more than see him in the distance. Boarders, I fancy, went to breakfast or Sunday lunch at intervals and were responsible for the innumerable stories of his merciless comments on unpopular masters and boys. His comments were certainly un-English, sometimes even apt, but they were rather strong meat for schoolboys. The seventh form, and other school dignitaries, sat for prayers every evening in a horseshoe on the dais of the school hall, with the Headmaster in the centre and the Head of the School on his right. One day Gow came in looking angry and sat down without saying anything. Then I saw him looking round the horseshoe with growing distaste. Finally he turned to me: "Jerrold, did you ever see a stupider set of faces in your life?" I said nothing; "and I believe," he added savagely, "they're as stupid as they look."

But that was much later. I had only just reached the Seventh, where beneath the magnificent Grinling Gibbons ceiling, we studied the rich refinements of Greek and Latin scholarship under I. F. Smedley, when the Edwardian era came suddenly to its close. At twelve o'clock on the morning of May 7th, 1910, we were summoned "up school" to be told that England was moving no longer under experienced guidance, into dangerous waters, that the death of the King meant the end of an epoch of tranquillity, and the beginning of years which would see vast changes that must affect the lives of us all.

Here was Gow at his shrewd best, giving us wisdom before

the event with a vengeance; and so, with a warning in our ears, our Georgian adventure began.

* * * * *

We certainly began it close to the heart of things. Our privileges at Westminster were both Royal and parliamentary. By right Westminster scholars are present at the Coronation and by right they can listen to debates in the House of Commons, a privilege which we occasionally extended to getting drinks at the different bars of the "Royal Palace of Westminster," thus anticipating my friend A. P. Herbert by more than twenty years. But the growing interest in politics, which we all felt with the new reign, was by no means solely prompted by thirst. One is necessarily *de son époque*, and it was obviously our epoch which was beginning. We were schoolboys no longer. Death had opened the door to the new generation. The problems of the new reign were for us.

Fortunately we were all more serious about the problems than we were about ourselves. The public schools had begun to get critical of their own follies. Arnold Lunn, in *The Harrovians*, set the pace and the fashion. It is still the best of the public school novels,[1] and opened a debate which is not yet closed. I have never changed the view that I formed at Westminster, and which all my contemporaries held more or less strongly, which is that the "public school tradition" is wholly bad. What is wanted, I was told then as now, is character not brains, but that is as sensible as saying that what is wanted is good food and not soap and water. There is no reason why

[1] I say this *pace* Lunn himself, who tells me that he regards it as a good book, but that it makes fun of the wrong people. No doubt this is true. Lunn was the "clever" boy, making a fool of his less "clever" contemporaries. The book is, none the less, a good one, because it exposes the failures not of the boys, but of the masters. It was their job to keep Lunn in his place and to educate his less gifted contemporaries. They failed in both entrusted tasks. The Public Schools survive because, as the years go on, the Arnold Lunns see a good deal more, but the Philistines, alas! remain Philistines, and, though their hearts are of gold, their heads are still full of sawdust. The result is one unbroken chorus of praise for the old school. I feel the same to-day about Westminster as Lunn does about Harrow, but however good a school is, it can still be made better.

you should not have both brains and character, and every reason, in a political democracy, why you should. We are to-day ruled by words, and the power has passed from the older aristocracy of producers to the new aristocracy of the pen and the desk—the organisers, the co-ordinators and the impresarios. There was never a time when the alleged public school tradition of disinterested public service as the first of secular obligations was more needed, but unless the public school class can win the intellectual leadership of the country these traditions, as far as they persist, will be wasted. It is no good not being a careerist if you fail to qualify for a career. The antithesis between brain and character, so far from being natural, is a grotesquely artificial antithesis created by the public school system as it was and perpetuated by the public school as it is. I shall be told that Eton and Harrow are exceptions, but one swallow-tail does not make a summer, and one fairy-tale does not make a philosophy. Eton and Harrow, like Westminster, existed long before the public school system began, and these three schools are, in utterly different ways, exceptional, for they do not draw on the "public school class" for their clients. Eton and Harrow are largely the preserve of the rich and Westminster of the poor. But although we at Westminster knew well enough that we should have to work all our lives, we had scant encouragement from our masters in preparing ourselves for the job.

Westminster was, on the whole, tolerant of my eccentricities: personally I have no complaints. I was quite capable of looking after myself, but I lived my last three years there under grave suspicion. "I hate him, he's always right," was Gow's comment on me to a mutual friend at a London dinner-party in my last year. It was quite literally true as an expression of Gow's sentiments, but fantastic as a description of the nonsense I talked, usually quite unnecessarily loudly. What the public schools forget is that their *raison d'être* is to

stop clever boys talking nonsense and to induce the others to open their mouths. They are heirs to vast endowments left to them for those express purposes. To let clever boys teach themselves and then to use their achievements as an advertisement for the system is a fraud on the public and a gross breach of trust. Westminster sent the average boy out into the world with literally nothing but a sense of superiority founded on the possession of a little of somebody else's cash. The overwhelming proportion of my friends were average boys, and they had nothing to do when they left but to start their education over again. How many of them completed it? The public schools were, it is said, put on their trial during the war and found not wanting in courage and sacrifice. What more can we ask? The answer is perfectly simple. From the beneficiaries of a privileged system of education we have a right to ask trained minds, and we do not get them. Just as the public school theory antithesizes brains and character, so the public school practice antithesizes mental and physical culture. The first privilege I acquired at school, at the mature age of fourteen, was freedom from all forms of physical exercise, while every member of the school cricket and football elevens was accorded, less formally but equally surely, freedom from all forms of intellectual exercise. The result is wholly vicious: a division of the school into hierarchies of hearty athletes and priggish scholars, entry into which is determined largely, not by merit, luck, or character, but by the precocity of development—a simple physiological fact which explains why the average school athlete is a fool and the average public school *sap* or *smug* is a worm.

That this division was inherent in human nature was an axiom at Westminster, and to this fact is due the one athletic achievement of my career. I soon realised that a scholar sufficiently exceptional to be in the sixth at fourteen was not going to get much of a chance in any organised athletics, so

I devoted myself to exploring fresh woods and pastures new. The result was that, largely due to the generous assistance of Cecil Kent—then rather well known as the founder of the 400 Club—I revived Westminster rowing. My skill was considerably less than my enthusiasm, but we succeeded in getting a famous Jesus Eight, which, stroked by Steve Fairbairn Jr., had won the Olympic Eights in 1908, to coach our little band of enthusiasts. The Jesus Eight were staying at the Pigeons at Richmond, then kept by Bill East, and we used to go down there on Wednesdays and Saturdays, sponsored by the Old Westminster Boat Club, which Cecil Kent had founded. Later, the London Rowing Club took us under its wing and we had to go out at 7 a.m. in the summer, breakfast at the club and bicycle back to school, to the great disgust of the authorities who felt that this sort of thing—taking exercise with no one looking on and with no school colours to be gained—was extraordinarily un-English. Finally we entered a four for the Public School event at Molesey Regatta and were beaten by Kingston Grammar School. The triumph of the die-hards was then complete. We should have won quite easily, as a matter of fact, but unfortunately no one would take our boat for nothing from Putney to Molesey, with the result that we had to race in a strange craft unlike anything we had ever seen before, which was centre-seated and had swivels instead of fixed rowlocks. Both these niceties were lost on the Westminster masters, who saw in the result nothing but the finger of God: that was what happened when boys who thought they were clever tried to become athletes. I see in looking at the Official School Records that "Water," as rowing is called at Westminster, began again not in 1910 but in 1914. Thus are pioneers rewarded.

My first and last race, like so much else significant in our modern world, was in the Coronation Year of 1911—a hot summer with a good champagne vintage, as we learnt when

we were spending our war gratuities. It was the year of Agadir.

The great event of that summer was, of course, the Coronation itself. Every Westminster scholar received, in due course, a magnificent summons from the Earl Marshal to attend the ceremony—a matter, so I have been told, of constitutional importance, since our part in the ceremony represents the traditional acclamation of the sovereign by the people, which is itself a survival from the elective monarchy of the Anglo-Saxons. As representatives of the people we were certainly more in our element than as units in the gathering of notables which filled the Abbey. Among our duties, we had to walk in the Regalia procession, and the nave, with seats banked up on either side blazing with uniforms and diamonds, was an impressive sight. Less impressive was the interval in the Service itself devoted to silent prayer, when the whole nave became alive with the rustling of paper bags and the eating of sandwiches. The congregation had been in their seats since seven o'clock, but still, as the first example I had had of the modern doctrine that *noblesse n'oblige point* this barbarism came as something of a shock. A few days before the Coronation I had an amusing experience of Gow's ready cynicism. I was walking through Dean's Yard into Hall for lunch and met the Headmaster at the corner of the cloisters. "I've got to introduce Murray" (Murray was captain of the School) "to the King and I can't find him: just wait here, and if he doesn't come you'll have to do. He won't know the difference between you, so don't make a fool of yourself and let him find out." Unfortunately the errant Murray turned up at the eleventh moment and my first and last chance to play the courtier was gone.

By the summer of 1911 I had gone in search of new adventures and taken to history. I had left the Seventh after some four terms of fairly successful endeavour to become a classical scholar, and had migrated to the famous Ashburnham

Library where the History VIth played bridge in the intervals of attending farcical history lessons from a visiting master. In theory we spent our lives reading and writing essays, with, I think, about five hours a week in form. The History VIth proper also did some French and, possibly, some German, but as the first and last member of the History VIIth I did nothing at all. It was the pleasantest occupation I ever had. I was by that time Head of Ashburnham House, which occupied the ground floor below the school library, and the famous staircase led from the library direct to my own sanctum. The doors were locked, but of course I had keys, handed on by immemorial tradition from one Head of Ashburnham to another. My mornings were accordingly spent reading by my own fireside, or more probably arguing, in the traditional undergraduate manner, about everything in this world and the next. We studied history on the grand scale, if not in the grand manner. Our attention was engaged by the causes of the decline of Rome, the social significance of feudalism, the intellectual and political consequences of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and last, but not least, the influence of race on history, an inquiry prompted by the appearance of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's meretricious but brilliant essay. Big subjects—and, as the result, we learned to run long before we could walk. But luckily our examiners never detected our basic ignorance, or more likely didn't care. Our essays were studied with epigrams but bare of dates. Some of us taught ourselves but more of us saved our bacon by getting at our own expense private tuition from Etheridge, the modern languages master, a companionable man with a genius for teaching who was, as a more experienced person would have expected of the modern language master at Westminster, a trained historian.

My critical attitude to the Westminster masters as a whole was greatly modified by this discovery, because I realised that, by parity of reason, it was quite possible that other masters

for whose presence on the Staff there was no evident reason, were also real masters of the subjects they did not teach. I have since found out that to a rather remarkable extent this was the case. Etheridge's genius consisted in confining his instruction exclusively to examination questions, yet supplying us with a technique of answering them so as to suggest wide and demand intelligent reading. He specialised in telling quotations from the lesser-known historians, preferably French or German, "Can one in the circumstances fully endorse Michelet's famous judgment . . . or should we not rather say, with Ranke, that. . . ." We were, of course, recommended to read the chapters from which these celebrated *obiter dicta* were taken, but there were many calls on our time. The cumulative result, if not impressive to us, was evidently so to the Oxford and Cambridge examiners as we all got open scholarships in 1912. I can think of no better way of spending two years than in reading history in pleasant surroundings remote from even the appearance of discipline, but it is a recreation rather than the foundation for a career.

Among my contemporaries in this form were Guy Chapman, author, publisher, and now curiously disguised as a lecturer on economics; Lawrence Tanner, now keeper of the Abbey Records, Leonard Rice Oxley, fellow and tutor of Keble; Romney Sedgwick, the editor of Hervey's Memoirs, formerly a Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, and now an official of the Dominions Office, and Brian Lunn, brother of Arnold Lunn, and Hugh Kingsmill, but then chiefly distinguished by his habit of coming to school very late and without a tie. His explanation was that his train had carried him on to the Elephant and Castle, and that he had left his tie there in his hurry to get back. Both these statements were often true, but they were never well received. Brian Lunn has since written a brilliant study of the Booth dynasty and a biography of the Devil in collaboration with William Gerhardi: he is now reported

to be commissioned to write a biography of William Gerhardi in collaboration with the Devil. Brian, however, has too much Irish in him ever to give the Devil his due, so I fear that the project will be still-born.

The aggregate of books that the History VIth of my time have written between them must be shocking and the variety of subjects enterprising, but I doubt if one of us could live for six months on our combined literary earnings. The pleasures of dabbling can be tasted too young for profit. My course of random reading was nearly interrupted in my last term by a pressing suggestion from Gow that I should enter for some essay competition open to all public schools. I compromised ingeniously by promising Gow to toss up with Romney Sedgwick for the privilege of entering. My good luck held. I won the toss and Sedgwick the prize. My one and only academic distinction was gained by cunning rather than by luck, for I discovered that by entering for the Balliol Classical scholarship and a Balliol or New College History scholarship simultaneously, I escaped half the special history papers. I don't know if any one had ever discovered this before, but in my case it was decisive. I knew enough classics to give my entry for the classical scholarship the necessary plausibility, and was able to get up half the prescribed history period well enough for New College, though not for Balliol, which was my first choice. I was afterwards profoundly grateful to Balliol for their good sense. Balliol is an excellent place in which to have one's intellectual measles, but the worst of all places for making a quick recovery, which in my case was already overdue.

The reason for this was that in my last year at Westminster our favourite amusement was the profession of Liberal opinions. Mine was, most unfortunately, the last generation which could acquire a reputation for brilliance in this simple way. The natural consequence was that we have since become, in the

ordinary course of reaction, capable of forming decided views based on the facts of the case. Nowadays the normal adolescent runs to authoritarian extremes, with the result that we are faced with a race of rising young politicians who, by way of reaction, have no convictions whatever.

I need hardly say that while we frightened our masters out of their wits we did not impress our contemporaries, and only once was a Liberal motion ever carried in the School debating society, which had a solid majority of cricketers and footballers whose footwork in the lobbies was more accurate than on the playing fields. Nevertheless, we did our best. We secured, by persistent lobbying, Mr. Lees Smith (then, of course, a Liberal), and by domestic bullying, Sir Henry Lunn, and by sheer good luck, Philip Guedalla, to plead the Liberal cause before us. On the other side we had Lord Hugh Cecil, lured there by his nephew, Jack Cecil, to deliver the first really first-class speech it was ever my privilege to listen to "from the floor of the house," so to speak. He was the first speaker whose words brought home to me the intimate association between politics and morals. Mr. Asquith, then my political hero, was more massive, and argued with irresistible force from premises which had every appearance of being valid. I had heard him often, and he left me each time more than ever convinced that the two-party system corresponded to a fundamental division of human nature into wise men and fools. Lord Hugh Cecil raised the issue above the level of argumentation and first suggested the shattering possibility that one might have all the arguments on one's side and yet be wrong. Still, by some strange chance, his visit marked the first occasion in our debates when a Liberal motion was carried! We were speaking in favour of the Veto Bill, and we won by the vote of a footballer who had his first attack of intellectual measles on the night of the debate. Obviously, he had wished in secret to be "clever," as ardently, who knows, as some of us had desired to be Greek

Gods in Pink, and here was his chance to be clever in public. It was easy to be clever in those days when there were no Socialists (that mattered), no Fascists and no Communists, but it was still very exhilarating. All that Lord Hugh had told us, of course, was that the same tribute could not be paid to God and to Cæsar and that the dispute was not as to the best method of sending tribute of Cæsar but as to the right of Cæsar to receive this particular tribute at all. Was the constitution made to serve man, or was man made to serve God? Reject the Liberal solution that the voice of the people is the voice of God and you are at once concerned with realities beyond the reach of argument. And so it remains.

For all these abstruse questions, my last years at Westminster were probably the happiest of my life, for the wholly immoral reason that I tasted power without responsibility. I was no petty tyrant. The trouble and the blessing was the opposite. I was not taken in by the great façade of responsibility which the public school system erects in front of its gods. I enjoyed the benefit of the façade but I saw through it. As my elders and betters did not, I had them at a perpetual disadvantage. I could say to any one, go, and he went, or come, and he came. But, as it is for the explorer Speke in Kensington Gardens, there was nothing to find and nothing to seek. We were supposed to be bearing the burden of our little world on our shoulders, but our shoulders were never bowed, for the little world was only an inflated balloon. We who were old enough to realise that we might have to bear, in our time, some part of the burden and responsibilities of Empire, were the first to learn that here there was neither burden nor responsibility. As Captain of the School I had a number of small jobs which an errand boy could have discharged efficiently: as head of my house I had a few letters from agitated parents to answer and a little rough justice to execute. And if, I asked myself, I had to set an example, then an example

of what? People write as if the public school boy were perpetually confronted with the necessity of saving his women from being raped or withstanding the attacks of a mob of treacherous dervishes. What they are in real life expected to provide is a spectacle of self-importance; they are supposed to acquire, from the example of their predecessors, the habit of being serious about precisely nothing at all. Truly the children of this world, who have inherited the schools founded by the children of light, are wiser in their generation, for the ability to pontificate about nothing is more necessary to a successful career in this country than anything else. But it is possible only to people of strictly limited intelligence, or to clever people with no imagination. My only concession to "good form" as defined by the masters was not to allow smoking in my house. As we usually lunched at the Ship in Whitehall where we could do as we liked, this was no great hardship.

I have said nothing of the Westminster Play because, as a non-resident King's Scholar I had no part in it, even when Captain. The last non-resident captain before me was Wilfred Greene, now Lord Justice, and also, by a strange coincidence, a Catholic; the next, some years after me, was my friend, Jevan Brandon Thomas, younger son of the author of *Charley's Aunt*, whose John of Gaunt in *Richard II* was the best Shakespearian performance I ever saw. In his own farce his fine voice and presence were wasted.

As a race, non-resident Captains were frowned on. They were considered, I imagine, irresponsible. Every public school master dreads the home influence as if it were the plague, in which fear they have been followed by the Board of Education, who would certainly amend Johnson's lines to read:

> Hear all the ills the scholar's life assail—
> Care, envy, want, the *parent* and the gaol.

Still, it was the springtime of our world, and we watched it with zest, stimulated to the heights by the visible anxiety of our masters. We were in a strong strategic position, as those of my friends who were leaving at the end of term had all got open scholarships, leaving to the rank and file, by way of a gesture, the more valuable closed scholarships to Christ Church and Trinity, Cambridge. The difference was made up to open scholars by smaller scholarships tenable at any college and worth £40 or £50 a year. These things being so, we could take our pleasures seriously, and I even went to the length of playing some football and cricket, causing considerable annoyance to the Games Master by turning out for the Third Eleven on one occasion. Most of my time, however, was spent on the Fives Court, Fives being the only ball game which people with no "eye" can ever play really well. The reason, I fancy, is that, being played with the hand, correlation of hand and eye is instinctive and not acquired, as it must be when the stroke is made with a racquet or a bat.

One would have thought all these activities reasonably harmless, but they were not reckoned as games for the purposes of salvation. One played fives, for one thing, with one's friends, and that was not what games were "for." The athlete knew better. Well, they have had their reward, and I have had mine, though I quickly learnt that mine was not to be in this world's goods, for when the scholarship results were read out as the last formality of my year of office, my name was not included. Luckily my sense of humour was too strong for me to fancy myself as a prophet on the strength of such a piece of idiocy, and the only people who were embarrassed by it, besides my father's long-suffering bankers, were the masters who found urgent business attending them in different directions when I tried to say good-bye to them. They need not really have been so frightened. I have suffered all my life from an inability to lose my temper.

Of course, we were troublesome at school. The early Victorian system which sent boys to Oxford or Cambridge at seventeen was right. Boys can only be kept at school till nineteen if they are kept back, and you cannot keep back boys living at home in London, dining out, going to theatres and music-halls and cafes and associating far more with grown-up people than with other schoolboys. I can see now what I failed to see then, that an intense pre-occupation with the school games and house matches and all the organised rivalries which are so carefully invented to keep boys from growing up, is essential if the system is to work, and that the public school masters' job is to make the system work at all costs.

And yet, if my lawful occasions ever take me through Dean's Yard, or, even more rarely, through the Cloisters and past the worn steps leading to the School hall, steps which so many later to be famous—bishops and poets, philosophers, soldiers and statesmen—have trodden in their eager and disquieted childhood, I am glad to be able to say, "*Quorum pars magna fui.*" We have to make so much of the journey of life altogether alone that the memory of active companionship, however purposeless it may have been, remains gracious.

CHAPTER THREE

DARK BLUE AND PALE PINK

AT NEW COLLEGE I was plunged into the heart of the Public School system at its worst, which is also its very best, for Winchester, judged from almost any standpoint, is the quintessential public school. In the days when the public school was for the public, the making of manners was necessary to the making of men, but the one thing necessary, it seems to me, in a private school for the sons of the well-to-do is to break the mould in which the English caste system encases its victims. It is not enough that beneath every old school tie there should beat a heart of gold: somewhere there must be some individual trait, some strain of eccentricity, some divine madness, for which the world is waiting, but for which, if the owner be an old Wykehamist, it must wait in vain. I found at New College that art and science, literature and history, were all "work," to be undertaken with a sincerity and a wholeheartedness quite foreign to the Westminster habit. I found also a ready acceptance of the strange hierarchies into which Winchester divides each year's progeny: the world, one felt, and was indeed told, would pass a different judgment at its peril. Other schools, worse manners, but we barbarians could, it was hinted, learn. Even Wykehamist bridge was orthodox. Luckily there were no systems in 1912 or I should have had to give up the game. Only a Bateman could do justice to the plight of a man playing bridge to-day with three old Wykehamists who "opened" without two and a half "quick tricks." Nor would William of Wykeham have approved of psychic bids. If I had to be plunged again as a freshman into a group

predominantly from one school not my own, I should choose Winchester every time: nevertheless it is irritating to be regarded as incurably "unsound" if one expresses any opinion not straight out of a book. The ordinary English idea that the expression of any opinion at all is unfortunate and unnecessary is much easier to deal with. You either say what you like or you say nothing. To a freshman at New College neither of these courses is open, unless you wish to be taken for a bore or a lunatic. My own case was doubly unfortunate because I came under suspicion from the Dons as well, being a history scholar proposing to take a classical school. This was unsoundness carried to heights too dizzy altogether and my tutors despaired of me even before they knew me.

Nevertheless, I remain grateful to New College, for its very friendly but rarefied atmosphere drove me sometimes into the hedgerows to look for companions less aggressively "sound." In the course of my exploration of "avenues" I made my first acquaintance with English provincialism, foreigners, and muscular Christianity. I visited, in the course of two years, Indians in Wellington Square, poets on Boar's Hill, Union politicians of all ages and races in the political clubs, blonde Germans at the Anglo-German Club and manicured Frenchmen at the French Club, and even so, long before my two years were over, I was dividing my energies, if not my time, between Oxford and London. To escape the public school atmosphere you had, in 1912, to go into the *coulisses*, to go to London, or to hunt. As a choice of evils I chose, to begin with, the exploration of the *coulisses*, which was fortunate for me because I found there the only real Oxford, the only part of Oxford that had any life of its own.

At Oxford in 1912, there was only a small oasis of university in a forest of old school ties, worn notably, as Arnold Lunn used to say, by English gentlemen who came from Winchester, Christian gentlemen who came from Rugby, and old Etonians,

a few of whom came from Eton. To which pleasantry, A. de C. Russell, now world famous as the chief interpreter at Geneva, replied in a pleasant quatrain:

L stands for Lunn
and also for Louse
I'd as soon see a Louse
as a Lunn in my house

To which Arnold Lunn replied with great heartiness that this was just as well since he was certain to see the one and had no chance of seeing the other.

Every college except Magdalen and the House, which were dominated by Eton and Westminster, who wear their ties with a difference, was in its corporate aspect an appendage of the public school system, with their organised games and their phalanx of industrious athletes whose fees and fines kept the University and College exchequers filled and whose athletic achievements ensured the University a good press. Indeed, I found that, like the pudding that holds the plums together, there were solid lumps of old school ties almost everywhere, immovable from their college walls, and very much in earnest about their lectures, their tutors and their degrees. What would have become of them afterwards remains a mystery. I can only presume that they would have returned to their schools or became dons at their colleges. One thing I know, that they all joined up at the very latest on August 5, 1914. But then, so did the rest of us, so that hardly explains their total disappearance from the public scene thereafter. But what is even more remarkable is the very real reappearance on the world's stage of almost every one who made any mark at Oxford. The schoolboy genius, like the schoolboy athlete, is usually merely precocious, and as his fellows catch him up, the exception is seen to be aggressively normal. Not so at Oxford.

Those whose natural indolence saved them from the thraldom of tutors, or whose eccentricities or enthusiasm won the battle with routine, stood out clearly then among their contemporaries and do so still. Among very many friends of those days, I can think of hardly any whose names are not fairly well known to-day. I owed my good fortune in this respect to the fact that I went out into the highways and by-ways for my friends and acquaintances, driven there in pursuit of office at the Union, of contributors to the Oxford Fortnightly, which I founded in my second term, and by a passionate desire to hear the sound of my own voice at every conceivable kind of discussion or debate. This last trait sounds more odious than it was. I have always hated speaking, but being more of a puritan at twenty than at forty I felt it a matter of duty to overcome my own and my audience's distaste for the performance. I conquered my audiences fairly easily, but have long since abandoned the unequal battle with myself.

I began my career in Oxford politics in an exceptionally ridiculous way by accepting invitations to attend meetings of the Canning Club and the Russell and Palmerston Club on successive evenings. A. P. Herbert lured me to the Canning, and some Liberal stalwart booked me for their rival's first meeting. The result of this was that I was elected to neither. The only thing I remember about my own appearance at the Canning is receiving, in the course of the debate, a note from Lord Cranborne, then, like myself a freshman, asking the simple question, "Where is Bohemia?" I knew at once that the writer was destined for the Foreign Office. Had I been able to give him the information it might have ruined his career, but the gods were good to him.

Nevertheless, his question was pertinent to the mood of 1912. A fantastic legend has grown up that the England of 1913 was a fool's paradise, when the days were spent in playing ball-games and the nights in dancing endless waltzes, while working

men starved on a pittance and the Churches preached salvation to the rich. The truth was widely different. Although the age of thrift was passing, the age of spending had not begun, and there was far more political interest after the death of Edward VII than there is to-day. Lord Roberts, we are told, preached to ears that would not hear; none heeded the storm-clouds upon the horizon. The wish is father to the thought. If little men, writing on little bits of paper, could tame the passions of peoples and bind the future securely with parchment bonds, then it would clearly follow that the catastrophe of 1914 occurred merely because no one foresaw it. The world, however, has always been full of little men with a taste for writing portentous words on pieces of paper (even in non-political circles they have the taste, only they write their piece on the walls of public lavatories). Actually, every schoolboy knew of the German strategic railways to the Belgian frontier and there was not a cadet in the O.T.C. who expected the German armies to attack through the Belfort gap, while Du Maurier's play on the German invasion of England so caught the public mood that it was played simultaneously in three West End theatres, a thing unknown before or since.

What was true and distinguishing about the England of 1913–14 was that the intelligentsia were still far and wholesomely removed from the political stage. The present Warden of New College, H. A. L. Fisher, was an apparent exception, but the exception, as far as it was one, proved the rule, for the younger dons would tell us the most improbable rumours, not on the authority of Mr. Fisher, the brilliant historian, but on the authority of "Mr. Fisher, who went to London yesterday." In any case, Herbert Fisher with his lofty detachment and clear, wintry smile, was destined for public office. It is only by producing, in the autumn of his days, a masterpiece of historical literature in the light of which the achievements of his great Cambridge contemporary pale their ineffectual firs, that he

has delighted his friends and silenced his critics. Nor can the entry of the historian on to the stage of history be, as it must be for a biologist, a mathematician or a logician, an intrusion. Rather it has to-day become a practical necessity if democratic politics are to survive. It is, alas, a necessity either neglected as a result of that paralysis of the will which is the vice of all democracies, or ignored, as the result of fashionable follies linked not obscurely with the theory of creative evolution. Take care of the future and the present can take care of itself. Wiser to remember and appreciate Seeley's aphorism: "the web of history is woven without a void." Not all the thousand millions we have spent on the salaries of schoolmasters and the nursing of schoolchildren since 1918 will wipe out a line of the Treaty of Versailles, or modify even the least of its fatal consequences. The problem of the twentieth century is not to create a literate electorate but to find an educated government. To imagine that you can survive the one without ensuring the other is a pitiable fantasy. Every one of the "ideas" about which our literate electorate is vocal, not to say strident, is taken from the lips of the politicians, and if the ideas have the seeds of disruption in them, the very fertility of the soil on which they fall will work ruin more rapidly than in any other age. Only in an age of public and compulsory education could Europe have passed from the high hopes of 1918 to the envy and malice and despair of to-day in so short a space of time.

What our vast electorate has done is not to demand from our rulers the sombre reluctant judgments of the trained historian, but to provide a sounding board for the naïve arguments from analogy of schoolmasters and professors. These professional "thinkers" have unfortunately shown themselves equally incapable in all parts of Europe of understanding anything of the chief problem of to-day, the restriction of the growth of the positive state. The result has been, in England as elsewhere, a major revolution, which will inevit-

ably in time divide us far more distinctively from the England of our fathers, than from the tyrannies of Italy, Russia, Germany, Turkey or Eastern Spain, to one or another of which, instead, our wisest men already recommend our politicians almost daily to look for an example!

If the complete lack of influence exercised by 1912 by schoolmasters, authors and professors was a sign of an unawakened political consciousness, then pre-war England was, of course, as unconscious as Rip van Winkle. Politics in Oxford, as everywhere, were still, in those days, for the politicians—a fact to which Europe owed the unparalleled century of peace, prosperity and expansion which divided the catastrophe of 1914 from the Napoleonic cyclone. And do we not by now realise that the responsibility for the catastrophe of 1914 rested not on the professional diplomats and politicians of England, France and Germany, but almost wholly on the pseudo-historical theories of alleged philosophers not hesitating sufficiently between an attractive generalisation and the unpalatable conclusions of patient research?

Nor is it uninteresting to recall that the logical conclusion of the fashionable German philosophies was apparent to every one in England except our own philosophers, who went on repeating the theories of the Enlightenment as tirelessly as the countrymen of the Kaiser went on adapting Hegelianism to their own contemporary problem.

Among less intellectual people it was even known when the war would break out. Lord Roberts had prophesied in 1908 the outbreak of war in 1914 and that it would be won by the allies under the command of an unknown French Colonel, Ferdinand Foch. So much for Colonel Blimp. From 1911 onwards every London newspaper had its best correspondents in the Balkans where, when the Emperor Francis Joseph died, a conflagration was bound to occur. Or so it was said. Lord Fisher's "Dreadnoughts" marked the beginning of open diplomacy, and

Mr. Amery and Lord Roberts introduced foreign politics on to the popular platforms and Mr. J. L. Garvin into the popular press. My own undergraduate paper introduced them to Oxford, through the precocious pen of F. J. P. Richter, now editor of *The Asiatic Review*, who wrote more good sense than the leader-writers of many of the London dailies. Inevitably, in the Oxford of 1912, we founded a club for the discussion of foreign affairs, to which Mr. J. L. Garvin delivered one memorable oration on the subject of the introduction of the three years service into France; "the strongest thing that any democracy has ever done." Meanwhile, Mr. H. W. Massingham was describing Mr. Garvin as a political epileptic who has fits on both sides of the road. This was intended to be an epitaph but was in fact merely an epigram—the easy half of the truth is never the important half.

It was, I think at the Grenville Club that I met for the first time the remains of the remarkable political machine which Gordon Woodhouse had created to break the Balliol-New College monopoly of office at the Union. The "machine" was held to be illegal, as an absurd rule forbade "canvassing" for the Union, and it was more seriously criticised by the apostles of good form. Woodhouse had been elected President in the summer of 1912 and was therefore President in my first term. For the only time in history, a petition had been presented to unseat him, and although, of course, it failed, it left behind a legacy of excitement, and attendances at the Union were enormous for the first few weeks. If canvassing is still forbidden at the Union it ought to be legitimised, because the only value of undergraduate politics is to provide an opportunity for meeting the incongruous and indeed improbable people who, properly organised and made vocal, could and did outvote the old school ties. Woodhouse might on a long view be said to have discovered the democratic as Carson discovered the fascist alternative to the unlimited claims of middle-class

Parliamentarianism. Unfortunately Woodhouse's experiment was played out in a toy theatre, and Carson's before the eyes of the world. The result is that whereas every attempt to form a third party by democratic means has failed, Carson's political army has provided the model which has led to the instalment of the rule of force over most of the once civilised world.

Futile, we may say, to compare the microscopic with the infinitely great. I greatly doubt this. When I was teaching the rudiments of tactics to newly-commissioned officers at Aldershot in 1918 I found that principles hard to explain in terms of sections and platoons became easy when applied to battalions and divisions. Principles are absolute. The modern political problem, which must be solved if politics are to survive, was writ small but very accurately in the Oxford of my day. The two orthodox political parties had their Clubs, recruited from the big colleges, and their leaders, chosen on the same principle. There was nothing to prevent any one not regarded as *persona grata* by these groups from standing for office at the Union, except the anti-canvassing rule: just as there is nothing to prevent any one outside either of the political machines from getting elected for Parliament, except the fact that he cannot make himself sufficiently known to do so. To-day the political machines representing organised labour and organised capital divide the more or less unwilling suffrage of the millions of the unorganised—farmers, black-coat workers, shopkeepers, small business men, professional men, intellectuals, and gentlemen. At Oxford in 1912, the Liberals and the intellectuals centred round Balliol, and the Tories, led by the cadets of political families, usually came from Magdalen, Christ Church or New College. And they divided between them the suffrages of the immense majority of politically-minded undergraduates who were neither intellectuals or hereditary politicians. Had we had a contemporary Belloc he would have pointed to the long succession of the

"best men" from the "best colleges" as a proof of collusion between the two parties—a conclusion which he would have reinforced by pointing out that whenever a Liberal interloper appeared, the Balliol vote went to a Tory from Christ Church, and whenever an unregarded Tory dared to raise his head, Magdalen and New College would rally to the support of the Balliol radical. The Bellocian view would, as always, have been right in its diagnosis of tendencies but wrong in its diagnosis of motives through attributing French logic to English romanticism. There was no conscious collusion, but the results of collusion ensued. The fact is that the political classes can only deal with other members of the political classes. When a Carson, a Mussolini, a Hitler or a Gordon Woodhouse appears on the political stage to give the reality of political force to the demands of the non-political classes, the political classes must fight or surrender. But the rebels must always begin by breaking the rules, since the political classes will always have made themselves secure as far as rules can do it. As with Carson and his volunteers, as with Lenin and his treacherous peace, as with Mussolini and his castor oil, as with Hitler and his treaty-breaking, so with Gordon Woodhouse and his canvassing. I eventually inherited the "machine" and know how it worked, a secret I share with Leslie Hore-Belisha, who has so evidently put his early training in practical politics to more notable use than I.

Whereas we only took our electioneering seriously, our opponents took their politics with portentous gravity. The manifest balance of advantage lay with the electioneers. Undergraduate politics are real: undergraduate political thought is a sham. Any fool can talk about politics, but it takes brains, character and a readiness to learn something about human nature to get office. No man incapable of getting office deserves it. On the other hand, the issue of pronunciamentos by overgrown schoolboys is a menace to democracy.

The student class are the cause of not revolutions but of counter revolutions. There was no student class in pre-war Oxford, because we organised the non-political classes exclusively for office, not at all for the production of manifestoes.

The pronunciamentos of the orthodox Oxford politicians were, of course, simple party politics, and, as such, as unexceptionable as Mr. Baldwin's pipe. I can still hear Gilbert Talbot, like Woodhouse a born politician, and like him to die in Flanders to the great loss of his country, begin a masterly peroration with the words, "speaking with a full sense of my responsibilities," and no one laughed. That was political genius. Not even Mr. Stanley Baldwin, that Walpole *de nos jours*, has ever got away with any thing as magnificent as that.

The founder of the "statesmanlike" school of Union orators was, however, not Talbot but R. M. Barrington Ward. I never heard him at the Union: he was in his fourth year and working for his schools in 1912. But I remember him well at my first Oxford tea-party in 1911, when I was up for my scholarship. A. K. Gilmour of Balliol (one of our Westminster historians) was my host, and others at the party were Aylmer Vallance and Godfrey Elton. After tea, B. W. descended on us, and stood in front of the empty fireplace while we discussed the foreign situation. It was the hour of Agadir and the Algeciras Conference was just beginning. We all expressed our views, while B. W. remained quite silent. Finally some one asked him what he thought. He still remained quite silent, and thinking we had drawn blank, I began to talk but was quickly silenced. Suddenly, out of the silence, a voice: "the press was very steady." It reminded me of my father's account of a party at Victor Hugo's when every utterance was preceded by a premonitory stirring of the great man in his chair. Whereupon a sycophant would raise his hand, "Le Maître va parler."

Gilmour's room housed at that moment four future editors; at least, if I am right in thinking that Godfrey Elton

(now Lord Elton) edited the National Labour *News-Letter* at the time when Vallance was editing the *Daily News* and I the *English Review*. It is, perhaps, a technical error to describe Barrington Ward as an editor, but I refuse, with all due respect to his titular chief, to consider him as anything else. At least he is one of nature's editors.

The great "responsible statesmen" of my own years were Gilbert Talbot and Walter Monckton, now K.C. and too busy to turn aside and collect the political laurels which are waiting for him at Westminster. But whereas Gilbert Talbot descended on the Union from the heights, with a secret or two learnt in the highest political circles, Monckton dropped in from the cricket field with a disarming smile and a delightful readiness to tell simple undergraduates how the problems over which they were making such heavy weather appeared to a man of the world. His was a more charming if less masterful technique. It is an essential of practical success to be able to treat the complex as if it were simple: "Asquith will get on," said Jowett, "he is so direct." Monckton was also direct.

Neither Talbot nor Monckton were typical Oxford Union orators. They were massive rather than clever, resonant but never epigrammatical. Their humour was of the Parliamentary kind; their retorts weighted with pity for ignorant youth, not burning with the hot flame of intellectual fervour. The greatest master of the Oxford Union style since Lord Birkenhead was, I imagine, Philip Guedalla. Alas, that style, matchless of its kind as an entertainment, is not a political asset to-day. Its purpose is to reveal to cynical youth that it is possible to be at once wise and witty, sincere yet brilliant. In this way, and only in this way, can you talk sense yet carry the Oxford audience with you. Oxford, however, is the last place left in England where cleverness is not suspect. To be able to trim a platitude into an epigram merely destroys, outside Oxford, the respect you would otherwise earn by

saying something which every one has heard before. In Oxford it is the only certain method of making common sense acceptable. It is only necessary to add that to be genuinely original is nearly as fatal with an Oxford audience as with any other. If A. P. Herbert had said ordinary things as brilliantly as he said unusual things he would have been the most successful of all of us; as it was, he suffered the fate of Arnold Lunn and was regarded as brilliantly unsound—as fatal in the Oxford Union as in the House of Commons.

The first inheritor of the Woodhouse "machine" was Geoffrey Dennis, an eccentric genius with no oratorical abilities, but with a gift for fine phrases which he delivered with an excellent imitation of intellectual arrogance. His Union career was a pose; he had little or no interest in politics. He felt the world wholly evil and undeserving of reform. His famous book *The End of the World* which recently won the Hawthornden Prize, is the greatest piece of elegiac prose written in English for three hundred years. And I published it! Dennis turned to electioneering for escape, just as he later turned to the organisation of the translation service of the League of Nations. He could never quite decide whether his efforts for the Union Presidency were a battle against fate or a joke; his infinite capacity for self-torture made him regard his victories as absurd and only his defeats as serious events. His friends had to be quickly responsive to the mood of the moment if they were to escape being branded as soulless vulgarians. Gifted with a daring and sensitive mind, his detestation of living made his life one long soliloquy on one short theme. Not all his artistry could make it wholly satisfying and he was the most dissatisfied of all. Still, he would have defied not only the stars but the electoral calculations and won the Presidency, but for a memorable oration by Ernest Goodman Roberts, now, I fancy, Chief Justice of Burma, on Welsh Dis-Establishment at the presidential candidates' debate in the summer of 1913. It

was a stroke of supreme ill-fortune that this subject should have been chosen, as all who have read Dennis's fine novel *Mary Lee* will understand. Dennis's mind had been starved in a puritan home; his own religious convictions was of the supreme reality of evil and the cruelty of puritans and inquisitors was the inspiration of his liberalism. The Welsh Dis-Establishment debate was memorable not only for Roberts's eloquence but for the lamentable feebleness of the Bishop of St. Asaph's closing speech. Dr. Selbie, Principal of Mansfield, had wound up for the Bill and had made the only possible case for it, that the Church in Wales, by clinging to its privileged position against the wishes of most of the Welsh people, was prejudicing the cause of religion. You will never secure the fervent allegiance of the Welsh people, he said, unless you go out, as the sectaries have had to do for generations, bare on the hillside and preach the Gospel.

The Bishop had apparently gone to sleep at this point, or else, as I prefer to think, the prospect was too distasteful for him to believe his ears. When he came to reply he turned querulously to Dr. Selbie and said, "You complain of having to go out bare on the hillside and preach the Gospel, but that's just what you are asking *us* to do—we refuse to do it."

And so said all of us. So Geoffrey Dennis lost his election, the Bishop got his majority, and the Oxford Union Society lost its first, and probably last chance of electing a poet as its President. Dennis's next serious book is to be a history of human cruelty, of man's inhumanity to man. Written, as it will be, with the memories of twenty years spent at Geneva, it will not lack inspiration. I do not fancy that the politicians will find themselves the heroes, or receive the plaudits to which they are accustomed as they look round at the avoidable suffering they have caused and see in it the occasion for the utterance of elevated sentiments.

I was strong in poets in my camp. Robert Nichols and

Geoffrey Dennis both wrote for the *Oxford Fortnightly*, as did Sherard Vines and Wilfred Childe. It was a bad paper, by comparison with the *Blue Review*, which was Balliol at its best or bloodiest according to the point of view. The *Blue Review* was characterised by a pedantic masculinity suggesting healthy young men smoking pipes, being commonsensical about everything that mattered, and quite unbelievably clever about everything, such as literature, religion or philosophy, that did not. R. A. Knox, then Chaplain of Trinity, was the signal exception, but even he has much to answer for, for in the *Blue Review* was published the first of those mock-serious analyses of Sherlock Holmes which have, alas, set the fashion for a peculiarly noisome kind of sophistication to a generation wholly unaware that the real point of Knox's *jeu d'esprit* was an attack on the follies of the higher criticism.

The *Oxford Fortnightly* was not in the least sophisticated. It was, in fact, what every undergraduate paper ought to be—a place where conceited young men could put the world right at no expense to any one except the printer. By dint of attacking everything we attacked a few things that needed attacking: getting back to nature, blood and guts, the Manchester school of drama, more and easier divorce, Maeterlinck, the Russian drama, the younger generation knocking at the door, the revolt against censorship—we disliked all these things with a fine impartiality and said so, wisely if not too well. I still look back with pride on my two line parody of the Maeterlinck school of drama—so pregnant with silences—in which the curtain went up on three old women sitting silent in a row. "After a time the curtain goes down, because they have nothing to say." Underneath, a single line: "Carriages at eight. Hearses at eleven."

It is strange to indeed look back on the files of my absurd little paper and find every single topic that we discussed still figuring in contemporary debate. The truth is that we were

entering on a period of unredeemed sterility; the attack on the Victorian assurances was wholly negative, and has for this reason left the matter for twenty-five years precisely as it found it. You cannot found a new religion on the basis of not going to Church, or a new drama on the basis of merely mentioning the unmentionable, while evolution as a political principle reduces itself to the absurdity of catching the bus which you are driving yourself, a feat which only Mr. Baldwin has ever claimed as a triumph. The Scandinavian dramatists certainly succeeded in creating an atmosphere of almost unbearable tension by which only a fool could be unimpressed, but the tension was, on the ultimate analysis, about nothing. If no one had observed the tension it would not have existed. Asked to observe it fixedly for three hours, the characters became so self-conscious that they began to jibber, and when some one knocked at the door they thought it was the crack of doom. It was, but for the younger, not the older generation. Meanwhile, Galsworthy was tackling social problems with almost as heavy a hand, not a little assisted, as far as Oxford was concerned, by his studied good form. Only the feminists got much excited about anything. Clearly something must be done for women in love with love and much misunderstood in consequence, and the true pre-war remedy was to give them the vote. The first and last leader of the feminists was Harold Laski, then, as now, debonair, eloquent, charming and wholly detached from the stream of life. I found myself much sought after as his opponent in an endless series of debates, the reason being that I was the only anti-feminist undergraduate who didn't consider that woman's place was the home. My case was that women were the only remaining non-political group, and that if the world was to escape political tyranny, it was necessary to avoid the political regimentation of the whole society. Who, to-day, will say that I was wrong?

The only intelligent political idea floating round Oxford in those days was Guild Socialism, to which G. D. H. Cole lent a wavering support. We were heartened by the beginnings of syndicalism, and rightly saw in the shop as opposed to the craft union the necessary and possible focus of an anti-political reconstruction of the state on the ruins of Victorian individualism. The Marconi scandal had enhanced the prestige of the Chestertons, already waving the anti-parliamentary banner, while the spectacle of rival armies in Ireland cast a doubt on the ability of old-fashioned Liberalism to ride even a storm in the Irish Sea. But syndicalism came from France and rest was mere reaction. There was no healthy enthusiasm native to the Oxford air. We flirted with Home Rule for India, a curious phase which once landed me into taking the chair for Mrs. Annie Besant (vox et praeterea nihil) at the Oxford Town Hall, after a lunch when I sat between her and Sydney Ball of St. John's, a veteran Liberal of the Gladstone school. We listened with detached sympathy to the single-taxers, as represented by Mr. Neilson, and the do-nothing economists represented then, as to-day, by Mr. Francis Hirst. Cecil Chesterton, whom I got to know better in the early days of the war, when we lunched off sausages and mashed in a public house on Putney Hill, visited the Fabian Society to prove the urgency of anti-socialism, and at the Union itself we had every star in the political firmament—Mr. Lloyd George at the height of his brief deserved fame, still burning with eloquence; Willie Redmond, who carried the House in favour of Home Rule, Walter Long, who carried it back to more orthodox views, and F. E. Smith, who in a fit of what was still unexpected if not unwonted exuberance, ended a brilliant oration by describing the Irish Nationalists as men who had fallen so low that they couldn't even pay a decent tribute of reverence to the Union Jack—how blasphemy could be decent he didn't pause to explain. Preceding him had flashed Philip Guedalla, "between

the devil and the deep K.C." and otherwise in his happiest vein, but F. E's robust insolence and still splendid presence dominated the House and won the day for Ulster.

Our own generation produced no star orators. Harold Macmillian, then as to-day, was impressively florid, and A. H. M. Wedderburn cultivated a presence which suggested that any criticism of his arguments was indictable under the laws against blasphemy. Harry Straus, then like Macmillan and myself, a nominal Liberal, was logical, and Harold Davenport and I were sometimes amusing, but the only orator of our time was a mysterious Indian, by name J. B. Raju, who had a flow of rhetoric in which he drowned an entire absence of ideas. Heard for the first time, his was an impressive performance. Unfortunately he had only one peroration. "When I think of India, scattered as it is with the ashes of my ancestors. . . . " On examination, it was not probable that Raju had any larger number of ancestors than any one else in the House, but he had an imposing black beard and flashing eyes, and for the moment one was ready to accept him as heir to a past infinitely more extended than that of any merely white and beardless Anglo-Saxon. Such is the magic of words that I think that Victor Gollancz and I were the only people in Oxford who were really unconvinced. Raju shared in our Valhalla a niche with H. M. Andrews also of New College and also a philosopher and dealer in esoteric wonders—the Black Myth and the White Myth respectively. Raju to-day is teaching philosophy in the land of his ancestors, and H. M. Andrews has become a banker and married Rebecca West, on the strength of which he has a reputation in the City as an intellectual and in Bloomsbury as a financier. I am sure he deserves them both as much as he deserved his nickname.

Victor Gollancz, J. B. S. Haldane and I spent many hours of the day commenting on our contemporaries. Haldane had the advantage of all of us because he was an Etonian classicist

working at science and was thus able to bring in his brave new world to redress the balance of his old school tie. He had at that time an encyclopædic mind, and a vision strange for those days of the future of the world. He was the first herald of the coming age of science, to which all things are possible except salvation. "Have you seen the paper?" I asked him one morning, when he came down about eleven o'clock and only half awake. "What's happened," he drawled, "is God dead?" He had a real indifference to religion very rare in a philosopher, and much less interest then in politics than now, but he was the only man I have ever known who had no intellectual prejudices. He was in fact a born investigator. Terence O'Connor, now Solicitor-General, then a fellow undergraduate at New College, used to guess that his future lay as a synthesizer of the sciences. Certainly he would have been more happily cast than Arnold Toynbee for the rôle of the English Spengler, but the Liberal sciences deal in values, which cannot be measured, nor even adequately investigated. You can define morality, if you will, as a statistical average of conduct but you can only do so in order to condemn it, and in condemning it you are setting up something in its place which, in setting it up, you judge superior. To which Haldane would reply that if your glands were different your judgment would be different. And so the argument would continue—with Victor Gollancz holding a watching brief in case of any development threatening the Liberal intellectualist position.

The odd thing, looking back, was the complete lack of any interest in practical fundamentals. Approaching unrestricted democracy, the question was never posed. The system of finance capitalism was never challenged even by the Socialists, who merely wanted to get control of what they regarded as an efficient machine. War was regarded as a political possibility due to human unreason, and to nothing else in the world. And by human unreason was meant nothing more abstruse

than the absence of a sufficiency of middle-class Liberal politicians to ensure a perpetual progress.

It is not the absence of wisdom but the absence of whole-hearted speculative folly which surprises me. The absence not of moral virtue, but of original sin. The truth, I fancy, is that the "new spirit" in English drama, in poetry, in religion and in politics was not a social and still less an intellectual revolution, but merely a long-overdue act of revolt of the provinces against their own provincialism. Love in a hayfield was, after all, only the poor man's equivalent of a society "romance". The protest against the censorship was only the insistent demand of the suburbs to know what people in London were talking about. Post-impressionism brought Paris to London, the eternal ambition of the impecunious. Unfortunately the actual and lamentable result of the "new spirit" was not to bring London to the provinces but to bring the provinces to London. Mayfair met the Five Towns and greeted Mr. Polly with delighted condescension. In the wake of Manchester, the potteries and the kailyard came the Irish Literary movement, provincialism *in excelsis*. The whole business was reminiscent of the relations between Kingsley and Froude:

> "For Froude thinks Kingsley a Divine
> And Kingsley goes to Froude for history."

The provinces in revolt came to the great heart of English culture to display their gaping wounds and London went out to greet the new arrivals as heralds of the dawn. Socially, the centre of gravity of the new movement shifted uneasily between Mrs. Sidney Webb's drawing-room and the Charing Cross Road. The situation might have been tragic but for the diversions created by playboys, cards and sentimentalists who pushed their way into the very heart of London and

forced the world to take their "new ideas" at their own valuation. It was a generation of great showmen, who had no literary racket to help them to fame or fortune. Their technique suffered in the process—none, even of the most successful, have ever quite grown out of the self-conscious "look-how-clever-I-am" attitude which is necessary to point a platitude in the provinces, and in 1911 they were in a condition of astonished delight which was positively infectious. But it was as performances that our world looked forward to a new novel by Wells or a new play by Shaw or an extravaganza by Bennett. We never for a moment regarded them as intellectual prophets. Wells introduced us first to the lower middle-classes and then to the intelligentsia; Bennett, with an uncanny foreknowledge, to the world of luxury hotels, steam yachts and business men with other people's money to burn, a world still as remote from the London of 1912 as was the world of the Five Towns. Shaw introduced us to Shaw, and so, like Bennett, enabled us to have a foretaste of the typical furniture of the post-war world, for Shaw was the first and greatest of the *déracinés*, of the men of whom you ask not, "where does he belong," but, "how much does he make"—not what does he bring to the world but what is he taking from it. But if Paris was no longer worth a Mass, these great men agreed that London was still worth a top hat, only Mr. Bernard Shaw wore his inside out, Mr. Bennett kept the price on his, Mr. Wells kept his on when they played "God save the King" to show that he would do what he liked with his own, while Mr. James Barrie, with a genius for publicity unparalleled even in such company, drew the world's attention by rubbing his up the wrong way and surveying the result with a smile full of pity.

That the top hat went out of fashion before any of them had got used to wearing it was not their fault. None of them, not even Mr. H. G. Wells, was, as is sometimes ridiculously imagined, the prophet of social change or intellectual

revolution. There were no such prophets in England before the war, any more than there are to-day. There were the beginnings of a struggle for power, but there had been no movement of ideas since the time, far distant, when the evolutionists first shattered Bible Christianity and humanitarian positivism first challenged the foundations of conventional morality. The liberal experiment was still in action, and no one in Oxford was prepared to interrupt it as long as it preserved the essential appearances. Democracy, said the wise men, had come to stay. That was the measure of academic, as of literary, wisdom in 1912.

The undergraduates were at least wiser than their mentors; regarded collectively, indeed, pre-war academic Oxford had no intellectual influence. No College, I imagine, had so many deservedly famous names among its fellows as New College when I went up in 1911. H. W. B. Joseph, Cook Wilson and Hastings Rashdall among philosophers; H. A. L. Fisher, R. S. Rait, and later, Ernest Barker among historians; Gilbert Murray and P. Mathieson among classical scholars were famous names far beyond Oxford. But they embodied no common tradition. You could not conceivably say of any College that it left its stamp upon its *alumni*. The relationship, so far as it could be summarised, was one for the education of the dons by the undergraduates rather than *vice versa*. They were continually in touch with us; we only spasmodically with them. They could sharpen their wits against ours, but we were seldom, if ever, allowed to return the compliment. Our intellectual exercise was taken among ourselves, in the endless Clubs and societies which filled our evenings, and to whose terminal dinners, for the chief function of a Club was to hold a dinner, a don or two was sometimes invited for our edification or theirs. Ernest Barker was unfailing on these occasions and was an admirable after-dinner speaker, but speech-making was not the strong suit with dons as a whole,

and Union orators were in greater request. Most, if not all, of the non-political Clubs were a pure waste of time—the worst of all being the College debating Clubs and essay societies, where the sole ambition was to appear clever or well-informed. The one required technique and the other, time, and both were usually lacking. The exception was a Club of Queer Trades called, I believe, the Shaftesbury, where no one was admitted till he had given evidence that he had, at any rate, mastered the technique of being thought clever. Even so, there was a scholarly background to the Shaftesbury humour which was decidedly painful. Scholarly fooling is a meretricious affair, like ritual without dogma, nor could I ever accept the Winchester tradition that a dirty joke becomes clean when it is made in Greek. Still, I am grateful to the Shaftesbury for electing me because I heard there J. B. S. Haldane's famous forecast of the future which he published many years after as "*Dædalus*," and because there I first met, in the person of Ronnie Knox, the only man in our generation who has persisted in being whimsical without becoming intolerable. Otherwise, what a sorry legacy Charles Lamb has left behind him. It is a nice point whether the robust style of whimsicality is more nauseous than the tender. The trouble in either case lies in a desire not to hurt combined with an equally intense desire to let it be known that you have the root of the matter in you. And so you put a brave face on it, and a gallant smile, being careful to let the hint of suppressed tears steal between the laughs. The suppression is bad morals, and the ostentation bad art, but the combination of the two is a certain box-office success. There is so much imported mutton masquerading as Lamb in Fleet Street to-day that it would be invidious to mention names. It is enough to say that Ronnie Knox, dissecting Ella Wheeler Wilcox for the Shaftesbury, approached his task quite differently.

Yet such flashes were too rare and Oxford seemed to me

then, and to all my contemporaries, a purposeless if otherwise monastic exile from the noise and bustle of life. This is not a case of being grown up after the event, for in the autumn of 1913 Ewan Agnew and I turned the *Oxford Fortnightly* into the *New Oxford Review* and arranged for its publication in London. Thus, in stolen week-ends and in vacation I was able to get at least the savour of pre-war London and to see Oxford from the outside before I was too old to understand what I saw.

The birth of the *Oxford Fortnightly* was over a cigar offered me by Ewan Agnew in the New College quadrangle. It was, Ewan used to remind me periodically, an expensive cigar. Yet it cost barely £100 and in July 1914 we got it back when we sold the paper—by then the *New Oxford Review* and a monthly—to Haden Guest. It was, in fact, the only paper I have ever been associated with which didn't lose money. This was due not to its merits, which were few, but to the cheapness of printing and distribution in those days, which made the running of coterie papers at least an attainable luxury. To-day a paper of that kind would have to be produced at half a crown and none of the youthful enthusiasts who might want to buy it would be able to afford it. Writ large, this explains why London, the largest and wealthiest city in the world, can only afford three evening and seven morning papers, by comparison with more than twice that number before the war. That, and the disappearance of "goodwill advertising." When I look at the advertisements in those old numbers of the *Oxford Fortnightly* I blush. To-day I should not have the nerve even to ask advertisers to support a paper with a circulation of two thousand among penniless undergraduates and struggling poetasters. Still, we asked, and we received, and no one, I imagine, was very much the worse. At least we had no message. There is a silly saying, popular among the elderly rich, that every young man with sound

instincts is a Socialist till he is twenty-five. Every man of every age wishes to leave the world better than he finds it, but it is the materialism of middle age, not the poetry of youth, which imagines that you can leave it better by trying, at somebody else's expense, to leave it better off. The world comedy derives from the world's division into two classes: those who wish to reform other people and those who wish to reform themselves. The world's tragedy is that the first class is commonly more successful than the second. It is easier to save your face than to save your soul. Nothing is easier than "practical" politics or "constructive" reform; a fact to which the multiplication of departments, commissions and committees bears witness. Young men ought to be anarchists, not Socialists, and they usually are, because they have not yet despaired of working out their own salvation.

Ewan Agnew, whose enthusiastic generosity of spirit enabled our infantile paper to be brought to birth, was buoyant, not ardent, in temperament. He wrote very little and had thus two of the essentials of a good newspaper proprietor, patience and silence. His strength lay in rejecting unhesitatingly anything that might have appeared in any other paper. The worse, technically, any contribution was, the more he liked it; because he had great possessions, he was incapable of turning away from unpopular people and ideas, but in harbouring them he inoculated them against envy and malice. In short, he was Liberal with Tory tastes, but nevertheless he preferred dining with Liberals because they gave you such extraordinary food. His favourite story was of George Grossmith, the elder, who was explaining to Charles Brookfield the ease with which a man of real talent could make money. "But you, my dear Grossmith," said Brookfield, "have certain advantages. No one else looks so extraordinarily funny in evening dress."

Agnew was, in fact, not unlike Brookfield in many ways,

and he would have appreciated another devastating reply to a famous actor, still living, who told Brookfield that some one, presumably another famous actor, had called him a jackass. "What would you have done?" "If I had been you," replied Brookfield, with characteristically precise emphasis on this necessary qualification, "I should have consulted a vet." Brookfield told me this story himself, as an instance of things best left unsaid, but I think he was wrong. Humour may sting, but never injures. That is the prerogative of wit. A great wit is either a moralist or a cad, and it is difficult to say which will make him the more unpopular. Pope or Talleyrand?

Brookfield had become converted to Catholicism in the days before such conversions had become the fashionable recreation of the irreligious. To-day among the intelligentsia, all roads lead to Rome. In Brookfield's day they still led to Romano's. His appointment as Censor of Plays provoked a storm, on the ground that Brookfield had once written a bedroom farce for Charles Hawtrey and yet had dared to retain the Censor's ban on *Mrs. Warren's Profession.* Had Brookfield desired an easy notoriety he would have censored his own farce when Hawtrey proposed to revive it in order to turn the controversy into cash. As it was, he allowed Hawtrey to go ahead, and the failure of the revival proved the folly of the charges. No indecent play could have had so short a run. When I knew Brookfield he was already gravely ill—he died in 1914—and his death had actually been announced two or three years earlier, but like Mark Twain's, "had been greatly exaggerated." A phrase in one of the obituaries which particularly pleased Brookfield was, "never a great actor," and when he reappeared at the Savile Club he announced his entry by putting his head round the door and repeating the words with regretful emphasis.

Brookfield always wore a stiff straight collar and a stock, and looked more like a hunting parson than an actor or a playwright. This was, I think, by way of a deliberate reaction

from the rarefied drawing-room culture of the literary circles, dominated by Tennyson, into which he had been born. His was the Bohemianism, however, of the bar, not of the pub, and it was not necessary then to be badly dressed to be mistaken for a man of parts.

But Charles Brookfield has come into this book as he came on to the stage of Georgian London—anachronistically. Of more significance to my story is W. L. George. If Brookfield represented at their best the foibles and fashions of an age when eccentricity was essentially aristocratic, the age of top hats, wine, cigars and theatre suppers, as opposed to beer and skittles, when you went to Savile Row to borrow money instead of to the Jews to borrow clothes, W. L. George represented, if indeed, he was not the first of the professional writers. Like Arnold Bennett and Shaw he was a complete *déraciné*, but he was neither a "card" nor a moralist. His first important work, *The Making of an Englishman*, was more than a piece of characteristic cosmopolitan impertinence. George was the precursor, the prophet of an age when Englishmen were to be made, not born; when writing was to become a branch of commerce, and commercial success the goal of social ambition. "If you're going in for literature," he said to me once, "you've got to be interested in the people who live in small, semi-detached villas in the suburbs." George was emphatically "going in for literature" when I first met him in 1912. When we brought the *Oxford Fortnightly* to London he became Literary Editor and wrote some fine criticism of the contemporary novel, and in one notable article he selected eight young writers from whom would be recruited the writers of to-morrow. These were Hugh Walpole, J. D. Beresford, Gilbert Cannan, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, Compton Mackenzie, Oliver Onions and Frank Swinnerton—the last two somewhat tentative choices. Reading this forecast twenty-two years later, is refreshing. No critic to-day could give you the names to-day of the books

which he hailed as masterpieces eighteen months ago.[1] Yet George shocked us all when he wrote in an article, "it is not only the right of an artist to see to it that he is well paid, it is his duty," and added, "in my own literary trade I have derived inestimable benefit from three years passed in the City. I do not believe that without that business training I should to-day be making a living out of literature."

George was, in a curiously detached way, the most selfish man I have ever met. He defined himself as a Frenchman *sans patrie*, and in an illuminating aside in one of his reviews he wrote, apropos of a denunciation by Saki of German militarism, "at bottom I should not at all mind being annexed by Germany. I can see nothing against it, as I do not walk on the grass." To-day he would have been Fascist for the same reason. The only justifiable opposition to Fascism can come from the poet, the peasant or the priest, and W. L. George represented worthily and brilliantly the mind of an age which despises all three with equal sincerity. Hence the slow but sure march of Fascism. If we are to make a success of the servile state it is better that it should be broadly based on the street than that it should be balanced on the pin-point of a central counting-house, in which moreover, there is, to say the least of it, a certain amount of doubt about the accounts. George had been in business himself, and was related to a good many of the Rand millionaires. He would hardly have missed this point.

George, indeed, had more than a spark of genius, particularly as a host. His dinner parties were the only parties I have ever been to which gave one the impression that famous people were worth meeting. That was because he had, like all his race, the gifts of the impresario. He collected people as his richer relatives collected china or silver or pictures. I owe him a profound debt of gratitude, for it was at his house that

[1]Among women novelists, George assigned first place to Amber Reeves, on the strength largely of her second novel, *A Lady and her Husband*, published by Heinemann in March, 1914.

I first met Henry Nevinson. "Isn't he a passionate old pilgrim?" he asked me one evening, as a collector might invite one to admire the show-piece of his collection. It was the only occasion on which I ever heard him betray a spark of emotion, though on the subject of cats and women he permitted himself to utter extravagant sentiments with Gallic persistence. When I first met George he was only in process of arriving, and the *Oxford Review* gave him, I suppose, a platform which was valuable. I have often wondered in what way. It should have been valuable to me also, but on looking back at the files I can see only too clearly why it was not, for I never wrote a line for it that was worth reading. The only facility I had was for verbal epigrams, though sometimes, if only by process of exhaustion or through printer's errors, they happened to mean something.

In an article on Oxford Clubs, for instance, I find that "three undergraduates and a clergyman are enough to form a club—in fact, a clergyman is the epitome of a club, for he is a man who makes his living by saying something when he has nothing to say and by doing nothing when there is something to do." And again, "Oxford epigrams are made by mistake or Mr. Bernard Shaw." And again, "Only the prudent look for their future behind them." And again, "Cambridge gives you knowledge; Oxford teaches you to do without it."

This kind of writing must, I imagine, have amused me, but I can hardly imagine that it amused any one else. The most charitable view which any one could take was that if, at any time, I found something to say, I might possibly be able to say it. I can only suppose that, unlike to-day, when I think too slowly to talk well, I must in those days have talked less nonsense than I wrote. On no other assumption can I account for my friendship with T. E. Hulme, one of the most considerable minds of the day, whom I met first at the Cafe Royal with Epstein and Wyndham Lewis some time in 1913.

Epstein was then at the beginning of his newspaper fame. Hulme had first met him when he was working on the Oscar Wilde memorial in Père Lachaise. He and Wyndham Lewis were used by Hulme as exemplars of his artistic and social philosophy, from which Epstein, I fancy, disassociated himself in his preface to his friend's papers, first published after the war. Hulme had an original and powerful mind; anti-pacifist, anti-romantic, anti-humanist; he must, had he lived, have become one of the major prophets of the intellectual counter-revolution so long delayed in this romantic island, but now at last on the way.

Hulme's death at the front (after a brief and brilliant defence of war in Orage's always intelligent *New Age*) deprived us of a creative thinker and a particularly brilliant talker, who saw in Epstein and Wyndham Lewis the first stirring of the revolt against humanism, the first search beneath the delusive envelope of the individual personality for the bone and sinew of inevitable relationships, "What you get in Mr. Lewis's painting is what you always get in any geometrical art. All art of this kind turns the organic into something not organic; it tries to translate the changing and limited into something unlimited and necessary."

Had Hulme lived he would probably have become a Catholic, but not, evidently, of the school of von Hugel or Acton; more likely of the Spanish type inspired by El Greco, reducing the human comedy to agonised dust. Asked to choose between Pascal and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, he would not have hesitated long.

I had many long talks with Hulme and Epstein at the Café Royal, and in a house at the corner of Soho Square, where I made my first and last bow to the intellectual world of Bloomsbury, for it was certainly more Bloomsbury than Chelsea. Lewis impressed me only less than Hulme. He was then dark, saturnine and gloomy—all qualities which appeal

to sophisticated youth. Whether he consciously practised what Hulme preached I do not know, but certainly to-day he holds the same views, with an added emphasis on the necessity of politics in a world dying of romantic notions about the divine right of personality. Epstein I think of with pleasant recollections, as a polite listener to youthful theories, mostly very crude, about the vanity of self-expression. My belief then, as now, was that all art must be useful, but that, of course, begged as large a question as the rival theory of self-expression. Useful to what end? To discover the limitations necessary to the disciplining of the human spirit. Man, Hulme would say, is a limited animal, and it is only by organisation that you can get anything out of him. The principles of the necessary organisation must be intuitively apprehended; that is the function of the artist.

Epstein usually held a discreet silence during these arguments; I say discreet because his "Christ," his "Genesis" and his "Venus" seem to me to reveal the incurable romantic; a de-Europeanised humanism, cosmopolitan and jealous of all the Gods. In his portrait busts he returns to Europe—Tarzan in evening dress—and captivates Mayfair.

But fame of that kind was a long way from Epstein in those years. Whether it was an age more than usually distrustful of youth (certainly there were no Michael Arlens or Noel Cowards making fortunes before they were twenty-five) or whether gates were harder to crash, I do not know. Perhaps it is sufficient to remember that the *Pink 'un* was still one of the best papers in London, and the *Pink 'un* was written by men for men, not by boys for women. Which brings me to Hugh Pollard, who, with W. L. George and Ewan Agnew, was mainly instrumental in bringing the *Oxford Fortnightly* to London.

Hugh Pollard had already left more papers than I have ever joined, and in 1913 he was editing the *Autocycle* and had an

insecure footing with the *Daily Express*, to which, later, he was to contribute the neatest headline I have ever seen in an English paper, on Einstein's first pronouncement of the Relativity Theory—"Light caught Bending." Shooting was Pollard's passion, and his *Busy Time in Mexico* recorded his first experience of revolutions, which was to continue at Dublin Castle in the stormy days of the Black and Tans, and in Spain in 1937, while his equally sound theoretic enthusiasm for pistols has led him into the witness box as Crown expert in more than one *cause célèbre*. Pollard was and is a natural writer, and his Rabelaisian gusto would make him a fine successor to Surtees if he had the patience to write a story sufficiently plausible to pass muster with any publisher's reader. In those days he had a flat in Devonshire Street, where he and Alan Osler, also, and more securely, of the *Daily Express*, used to talk furiously until they were too weary to speak (or until the beer was finished) and then carry on the argument with the foils.

Pollard took offices for us, made printing contracts, bought paper and finally performed the most heroic service of all by introducing us to Haden Guest, who bought the paper just before the outbreak of war. He also invented the New Elizabethan Movement for which I wrote an eloquent leading article in March, 1914. The movement, I see, was "to be characterised by a renaissance of adventure . . . the trouble with our politics is that we get the worst of both sides, for they spend their time reforming third parties. No one ever reforms himself; that would be an adventure." No doubt, but the rest of the article is less helpful and I am left, I regret to say, with no clue whatever to this riddle, unless, of course, it was the New Elizabethan Movement which led to the European War.

But the most notable thing in that March, 1914, number of the *New Oxford Review* is an anonymous notice of a long-

forgotten novel which ends delightfully: "this is the kind of book that even a reviewer reads."

Pollard looked, and occasionally behaved, like the German Crown Prince and had a habit of letting off revolvers in any office which he happened to visit. When I asked him once if he had ever killed anybody he replied, "never accidentally." Hugh Kingsmill would have immortalised him in his brilliant musical comedy, if that brilliant musical comedy had ever been produced. I only remember one verse of the Pollardian hero's song, but it certainly had the authentic ring:

"Last night I rifled Vishnu's shrine
I slew his friend by day.
For all my toil, I boiled in oil,
To my intense dismay."

Hugh Kingsmill and Kenneth Hare used to carry this musical comedy all round the less-expensive London restaurants, and if one came across them reading their respective contributions to each other, one realised at once that no musical comedy had ever been better received.

I first met Hugh Kingsmill when he had returned from an exploratory voyage to Cambridge, where, with great trouble, he had arranged an interview between Frank Harris and A. E. Housman. The result had been appalling. Frank Harris, though a good short-story writer and a pioneer in the now-overworked vein of psychological criticism, was a charlatan. He worked a literary "stunt" as a prospector may work a claim, to get what he could out of it because he thought there was something to get: he was simply incapable of understanding virtue of any kind except as a commercial exercise on gainful occasions. He was, for that reason, lost in quite genuine admiration for the technical felicity of Housman's patriotic poems, and quoted at him, across the luncheon-table,

the last three stanzas of the poem in the *Shropshire Lad* which ends . . .

> "Get you the sons your fathers got
> And God will save the Queen."

when his enthusiasm overcame him and he burst into a roar of laughter and bellowed, "'And God will save the Queen.' That's the way to get 'em. . . . 'And God will save the Queen,' the silly old ——!" By the time Harris's exuberance had subsided, Housman had left in not unnatural disgust, and Harris was left wandering round Cambridge wondering why. And yet I understood why Hugh Kingsmill ever after had a lingering affection, though quite divorced from admiration, for "poor old Frankie." It lasted right down to his death, the news of which reached us when Kingsmill was staying with me in Normandy. He looked regretfully if hopelessly through the *Times* for the obituary. "Poor old Frankie" he said at intervals through the day. "Not a line. Poor old Frankie."

Harris was vulgar, but at least he lacked the refinement which, conjoined to currency manipulation, has rotted the foundations of our civilisation. It is better to be primitive than post-war, and you can go one better; for catching sight of Joad when I was talking to Henry Nevinson at a Soviet Embassy reception, I remarked on his primitive appearance. "Not primitive," Nevinson corrected, with his wonderful smile, so full of disillusioned but still faithful enjoyment, "not primitive . . . primeval."

All of which, however, is a long way from 1913, for Joad in those days was known only as the standing turn at private business at the Oxford Union, where his carefully calculated eccentricities, pronounced with an exaggerated lisp, were the bane of any President whom he disliked. On the occasion of his most famous question, "Pleath, Thir, may I leave the room,"

he got, however, better than he gave, for Gordon Woodhouse, quelling the uproar with mock indignation, observed, "The Hon. Member has the floor of the House."

The most serious of the young writers in pre-war years wrote for Orage's *New Age*, Cecil Chesterton's *New Witness*, Massingham's *Nation* or Clifford Sharp's *New Statesman*—four editors of zeal, courage and integrity. How many such are there to-day? The *Nation* led in circulation, but already in 1913 Massingham's staff were middle-aged, and young men (D. H. Lawrence was an exception) were worshipping elsewhere. Middleton Murry's *Rhythm* might have attracted some of them, but that shrine had room for only one worshipper. So Orage and the Chestertons and the *New Statesman* divided them.

Everything that has happened to the modern world was foreseen, explained and challenged by Hilaire Belloc long before the war broke out. The weakness of middle-class parliamentary democracy had been concealed behind an imposing façade. The new privileged aristocracy of the pen and the desk, with their retinue of renegade aristocrats and ambitious share pushers, was still at an outwardly respectful distance from the throne. But Belloc and the Chestertons and Orage changed the current of public opinion and taught us to look beneath the surface and examine the foundations of old loyalties. The change was far from being immediately to the good. Leading a challenge to middle-class Parliamentarianism while people still fancied themselves governed by an aristocratic oligarchy based on the general will, Belloc and his friends became classed as political eccentrics worshipping strange gods in Sussex. While Catholicism on the Continent was bringing formidable arguments to bear against the menace of a corrupt secularism and a disingenuous internationalism which was in reality a purely disintegrating force, Catholicism in England degenerated in the public regard from a fact into a literary fad.

Catholic influence was further weakened by the acute dislike of the majority of English Catholics for the principles, policies and practices of the only organised Catholic body in public life—the Irish Parliamentary Party. As Dr. David Mathew in his interesting study of post-reformation Catholicism in England has rather cruelly observed of the England of 1910, "it is worth noting that the Catholic layman upon whom public interest was most concentrated at this time was Dr. Crippen."

What would have emerged, but for the war, is the most difficult question I can imagine. Youth was impatient and Labour growing angry. But there was a lack everywhere of integrated thought. Jim Larkin, the Irish Communist Labour leader, was brought to the Oxford Union by G. D. H. Cole who was advocating guild socialism and favoured by implication the shop as opposed to the craft unions. Liberals stood for the coercion of Ulster and Radicals carried through the Insurance Act—the first step on the road to the regimentation of the working class.

All of them in fact, except Belloc, were equally confident that they had ridden the storm; the Whigs were complacently blind to the social consequences of Liberal ideas and the Tories as usual banked on the Englishman's dislike of revolutions. In Ireland the parties bluffed each other to the verge of a civil war, which would actually have broken out when the front benches had compromised the issue too late for peace and too soon for honour. As for the Socialists, they were well content to see their work begun for them by Mr. Lloyd George.

The intellectual mood of the governing classes was truly reflected in the two great theatrical events of the period, the discovery of the Russian Ballet and the birth of Revue. The characteristics of both were a constructive denial of the need for sustained and coherent thought. Even the lightest comedy reached a conclusion, however banal; even the lightest

Victorian ballad resolved a doubt. The new temper was satisfied with a passing comment and a passing mood. Revue erected irrelevance into an art and the Ballet dignified reverie with the pleasant trappings of an adventure of the soul.

The change, of course, was social as well as intellectual. The transition from the music-hall to the Revue marked the end of Edwardian London. It was followed by the disappearance of the Empire promenade and the Edwardian night-club. I claim no close acquaintance with either, but I saw enough of both to realise their immense moral superiority to the world of the gigolo, the demi-vierge and the half-caste which Noel Coward in a reflective moment put on the stage with such conscious fidelity in the last act of *Cavalcade*. For those who prefer statistics to ethics, the commentary on this topic provided by the Registrar-General's returns is equally illuminating.

CHAPTER FOUR

WE SHALL NOT SHEATHE THE SWORD

I SOMETIMES fancy that history will see in England's effort during the war years just the opposite of what the press said. The scramble for cash—that yellow fever of which our civilisation is dying—was interrupted, we were told, in 1914; our social system was re-integrated, the classes were re-united, man discovered man, and even God. Yet I am less struck by these glowing tributes to ourselves which are scattered through the press and the literature of 1914–17 in such profusion, than by a remark made to me by R. H. Mottram years after the war. The English, he suggested, being a slow-witted people, delayed passing their judgment on the conduct of their leaders until 1926. And then, having passed their judgment, forebore, with characteristic good humour (which might also be regarded as a fundamental lack of intellectual integrity) from giving effect to it.

This is not written as an endorsement of the preposterous legend that "the people" were "tricked" into a capitalist war. War is not a sentence of death passed by the politicians on the people, but a vote of no-confidence passed on the politicians by the people. The natural and normal form of war is civil war, because war is an act of revolt against the abuse of authority. Politics end when war begins. Politics is concerned only with the no-man's land between Law and War, between what is accepted as morally valid and what is accepted as morally intolerable. War is what happens (as long as men are free) when morally intolerable situations arise. It is only war as an instrument in the hands of politicians for implementing their politics which is iniquitous and it is equally iniquitous whether the policies come from Geneva, from Potsdam or from Rome.

The war of 1914 was, on the one side, a German politicians' war (which our politicians failed to prevent), and, on the other side, a revolt of free peoples against Germany's policy. If the Liberal government had refused to lead the revolt, they would have been out of office the day the Germans crossed the French, not the Belgian frontiers.

To misunderstand this is to misunderstand everything about war and peace. The readiness of a people to fight cannot be prepared or commanded. It is not, as politicians absurdly imagine, the final tribute which good citizens pay to the virtues of their leaders, the final test of their loyalty to a political system, but an instinctive and more or less unconscious assertion of their rebellion against their leaders, of their own right, in an emergency realised as supreme, to decide the issue for themselves by putting themselves forward ahead of their leaders, transcending the argument of words with the eloquence of action, compelling a measure of the world's attention which no merely political utterance, however unimpeachable the sentiment, will ever secure.

This precisely was the mood of 1914. I can remember as if it were yesterday walking across the Blandford Downs with William Ker, a fellow Oxford Liberal, listening to Vere Harmsworth, who was recounting to us some political project of Lord Northcliffe; Ker at once challenged the right of any politician to use the mobilised forces of the nation in pursuance of any purpose more complex than a military victory. "Don't you see," he said, "this is *our* war, and when it is over. . . ." Alas, long before it was over, Ker and Harmsworth were dead, and the politicians had given the lie to the generous enthusiasm of youth. It had become *their* war, to issue finally in the injustice of the Versailles Treaty, and to be followed by the most deliberate and cynical betrayal of the peoples by progressive politicians which history records.

But we were far, thank God, from the contemplation of

those iniquities in August, 1914. We were not misguided or misled, but merely ardent, confident and rebellious. We could, and did, oppose our untrained integrity of purpose to the disciplined mechanics of political force, that force used as an instrument of policy which it is now the declared aim of the unmasked conspirators of Geneva to impose upon the whole world. The war began, not in the House of Commons, but outside Buckingham Palace on the night of August 4. The same crowd that cheered the King on that memorable occasion would have been demonstrating angrily outside the House of Commons if Mr. Asquith or Sir Edward Grey had not shown themselves to be, unlike some of their successors, men of courage and integrity.

Our genius for sentimental bathos made other scenes also memorable; most notably the Empire Theatre during the first week of the war. "We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go." I have heard many of the masterpieces of our literature magnificently rendered many times since then, and have been less impressed. The words are, I am well aware, vulgar, and the tune ridiculous; the whole affair was, I have been told, a mere effervescence of alcoholic enthusiasm. It sounds convincing enough, now, only it doesn't happen to be true. The Empire was the last outpost of Edwardian London, the London of Romano's and the *Pink 'un*. There was no difficulty in distinguishing between the sexes in that audience and no need to waste words in analysing their relations. It was the world and the flesh, with the devil driven off the boards. Original virtue stripped to the buff. At the bar behind, the ladies of the promenade were standing drinks to any one in uniform—of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

To be one of a crowd was to me, a new and exhilarating sensation. Comradeship is, no doubt, the easiest form of virtue for the simple, if the hardest for the over-sophisticated. Early in August I went to Oxford to fetch some clothes and books

I had left there and met G. D. H. Cole in the street. He, too, was one of a crowd. He felt we were right, but the same fact which made me supremely happy made him uneasy. But then, Cole belonged to the intelligentsia. A few days later, Hugh Kingsmill and I induced Middleton Murry to make a tentative approach to enlistment in the Twenty-fifth County of London, a cyclist battalion with headquarters at Putney. But Murry, we saw from the start, shared Cole's uneasiness. The majority could not be right.

We had been led to Putney by Hugh Pollard, after a tour of the other London Territorial Depots had proved fruitless, as all units were up to full strength and the recruitment of second-line units had not yet begun. Like almost every one, we held the firm belief that soldiering was a highly technical operation, and the simple idea of applying for a commission never occurred to any of us. This was fortunate, for we had a lot of quiet fun at Putney, and learnt enough about the appearances of military life to avoid making complete fools of ourselves later.

Our first introduction to war was singularly easy, for the Twenty-fifth County of London was made the headquarters for recruiting motor-cyclist dispatch riders. Hugh Kingsmill, Kenneth Hare and I got engaged as clerks at the immense salary of £3 a week to deal with the hundreds of applications that poured in. Our next step, when the second-line battalion was formed, was to sell our bicycles to the Government, which was a further refreshment to the Exchequer. But the war began; very politely but quite firmly, we were enlisted, all except Middleton Murry, who had a cold. Sometimes we even paraded, with C. D. Stelling as a notable exception. Until August 4, Stelling had edited "Mr. Gossip's" columns in the *Daily Sketch*, one of the earliest of the now ubiquitous gossip columns and then quite the best. Reporting our section as present, Hugh Kingsmill was asked one day by our platoon sergeant for an

explanation, in view of Stelling's absence. "No parade is complete," he replied hotly, "without the absence of Stelling."

Stelling's absences were temporary, if recurrent. Murry's, alas, was permanent, and we all regretted it. As a substitute for more active companionship, Kingsmill and I went to tea with him and Katherine Mansfield. I got the impression of an angry tigress keeping watch and ward over a stray cat which had wandered into the jungle and wanted, half-heartedly, to get back to the world of pavements and free milk. I suppose we talked about literature—one usually does in the Redcliffe Road. Katherine Mansfield had, in life as in her writing, the knack of making her surroundings important. Murry boiled the water and poured out the tea, but she drank it as though it were the nectar of the Gods, a proceeding which she combined (and somehow it did not seem at all incongruous) with a strong attack upon him for not seeing that the water was boiling. Meanwhile we talked first about H. G. Wells and then about W. L. George, whose impertinences had obviously come as a relief to her after so much flattery. Katherine Mansfield had one quality common to the saint and the artist, that all created things were to her equally important in their natural order; in her approach to them the rest of the world was forgotten and its judgments and witness were simply non-existent. Unfortunately she had no sense of values of her own. People she had met, however unimportant in the world's estimate, became significant to her not because God had made them but because she had met them. She was pervasive and possessive, but I can't remember anything in particular that she said. Murry, however, never recovered from his cold and our war went on its quiet way without him.

The trouble, of course, was that Murry, like Cole, was born with that imperative conviction of the importance of one's private life and views which war so uncompromisingly affronts. Foolish people sometimes wonder why women, on

the whole, sympathise with war. The reason is, of course, that only in war are men called upon to make the kind of sacrifice that nature imposes on all women always. I do not, of course, refer to the question of physical risks (the risks of motherhood are a disease of civilisation), but to the sacrifice of individuality, of the private life, in other words, which the normal and necessary occupations of women demand. Political and literary women are uncompromising pacifists by an equally normal dispensation of nature, not because they are fulfilling, but because they are denying the natural order. With the end of war will come the end of society, not because war is good, or because society is evil, but because the desire for a private life is itself fundamentally anti-social and society will not survive any generalised expression of that desire.

These reflections are aroused by my recollections of that almost isolated glimpse of a world to which the war was not a public but a private catastrophe. As the war went on, many of those who lived in this world made mistaken pleas of political hostility to the war, mistaken because they sprang from a profound misunderstanding of the nature of their own aversion from the struggle. Better the death of society than that such things should be done is a fine-sounding phrase, but it is, on analysis, an absurdity. If you have no right to allow men to sacrifice themselves, you can have no conceivable right to sentence a whole society to extinction. Pacifism springs, in reality, from no such arrogance, but from a profound anti-social instinct, which merely masquerades as internationalism, religion or morality, which are to any one who thinks twice about them, manifestations of the social conscience demanding as uncompromising a sacrifice of the private life as war itself.[1]

The anti-social instinct, and therefore pacifism, is bred of

[1] Since these lines were written the problems faced have actually arisen, the pacifists having recently been forced to repudiate their allegiance to the law of internationalism just as they were forced in 1914 to repudiate their allegiance to the law of the national State.

the noise and vulgarity of great cities, a fact writ large in the history of war, and it is part of the curse of our modern urban civilisation that it forfeits the allegiance of the best as easily as of the worst. Nevertheless the part of parasite on a civilisation for which you are neither prepared to live or to die is not a noble one, and the effort to compensate its obvious moral deficiencies by working for a dictatorship of the *déracinés* (*ubi bene ibi patria*), where private lives will be invested with the dignity of public service, is even less attractive. It is, of course, merely a joke, or, in the modern idiom, a racket, that this particularly vile form of dictatorship should be known conventionally as the dictatorship of the people.

Happily I spent most of the early months of the war far removed from the outraged dignity of the literary coteries—indeed, I spent most of it in the Authors Club, where Charles Garvice retailed the gossip of the Shires, Lucien Wolff gave the English point of view on the international situation, and Morley Roberts from a point of vantage in the Club which he had occupied every afternoon for as many years as any one could remember, played, with eloquent bravura the part of the adventurer in strange lands to whom a night spent in an ordinary bed was a startling luxury. The only untoward incident was the return of A. J. Dawe from Louvain, where he had gone, as became the ex-editor of the *Isis*, for news. He was indiscreet enough to let out that Louvain had not been totally destroyed and that the Germans were not all drunk. This was a severe disappointment to the patriots, who later in the war were to provide almost the entire staff of the Censor's Department of the War Office. Their only comparable shock came at the regretted end of the war, when Hugh Kingsmill sent a postcard to the Club from his prison-camp in Germany, saying, "Need I say that both my ears have been cut off?"

Charles Garvice was, for some strange reason, the permanent chairman of the Authors Club. He had "commenced country

gentleman," as Dr. Johnson would have said, some years before, but used to make a majestic entry into the smoking-room, wet or fine, peace or war, at three o'clock every Saturday afternoon. His rôle was that of man of the world, revisiting the friends of his ardent and less-experienced youth but with a kindly word for all of them. I only heard him make one reference to literature, and that was when he began a sentence with the startling words, "The best book I ever wrote. . . ." Unfortunately the secret had died with him, for Francis Gribble's precise voice was heard announcing, "We don't want to know what was your *best* book, but we *do* want to know the answer to the question we have all been discussing for years—what was the *worst* book you ever wrote?"

Gribble specialised in rhetorical questions with a pleasant, if sometimes deceptive, flavour of wit. An otherwise unknown man of the name of Walker, who happened to be wearing breeches and gaiters, was going out of the Club one day when Gribble, in his best Oxford Union manner, stopped him. "Excuse me," he said, "but can you tell me whether you wear those leggings because your name is Walker, or are you called Walker because you wear those leggings?" I may be wrong, but this always strikes me as being far funnier than Dean Swift's equally idiotic question about the hare and the wig.

Gribble was unlucky enough to be interned at Ruhleben at the beginning of the war, but there was still plenty of goodish conversation of a kind. The Authors Club was founded, I believe, by Sir Walter Besant, but by 1914 it had not, like its founder, exhausted the obvious. If it had any literary flavour, it was that of the amateur of letters, the quarterly reviewer, the civil servant guilty of an occasional volume of criticism, the business man who wrote novels for a recreation, with a sprinkling of authors whose futures, in 1914, were a little behind them—Conan Doyle, Anthony Hope, Cutcliffe Hyne and Horace Vachell, for instance. Yet even these distinguished

writers had an Authors Club touch. None of them belonged to the "writing classes" or played much part in the literary life of their times. It was this characteristic, of course, which made the Club tolerable. A club of strictly professional authors would be only a pub. The Authors Club, in fact, owed its vitality in the thirty years of its hey-day to the fact that it was a place where authors could avoid meeting other authors. To-day it is in danger of becoming a place where would-be authors hope to meet publishers. The result is a strongly-marked centrifugal tendency, every member of the club suspecting every other member, usually quite without reason, of literary pretensions.

My recollections of the early weeks of the war are complicated by the nature of the time-scale on which we build our memories. People often ask why time seems to pass more quickly as we grow older. The answer, of course, is that the time is, in fact, shorter as we grow older. For a child of eight, one year represents almost the whole of his conscious rational life (if we accept the canonical view that a child attains the use of reason at the age of seven). At fifty-eight, the same number of days represent only a fiftieth part of our rational life and can claim therefore only a tiny space in the treasury of our recollection. To people of my precise age, the first few weeks of the war were, too, also the first weeks of our adult responsible life, and seemed, therefore, to us a prolonged period of the utmost importance. This fantasy is heightened by the fact that during the period between August 7, when we attested at Putney, and October 6, when I joined the Royal Naval Division as a sub-lieutenant, the fortunes of Europe had been almost decided. "Your Majesty, we have lost the war," von Moltke remarked to the Kaiser, after the retreat from the Marne. Few generals in the four years of Armageddon spoke so much sense in so few words. The only question, indeed, is whether England had won the war or whether von Moltke had lost it. Certainly

it was the establishment, at the critical beginning of the war, of the command of the sea, which enabled the German check on the Marne to be made decisive. Had our communications with Belgium been interrupted, the Channel ports, for all von Kluck's fumbling, could not have been saved, and the Allied flank would, after all, have been turned. The Allies would, in that case, have fallen back behind Paris later if not sooner and the shock to the confidence of the French people in their leaders would have been staggering, if not fatal. How little we knew, and still know, of these events. To-day as then, nine people out of ten imagine the Marne to be a British victory, although, when Galliéni struck, French was still in retreat. Worse still, the British advance, when it began at last, was so slow and indecisive that it turned the Marne into a tactical failure. By September 10 the German Headquarters had regained full control of the situation and retained the initiative on the Western Front till 1917. The result left its mark on the world's history, for it led directly to the collapse of the Russian Empire and the defeat of her armies in the field. It was a high price to pay for the whim of one British general.

When I joined the Naval Division on October 6, the issue of the battle for the Channel ports was not actually decided. The Naval Brigade was still in the trenches at Antwerp; the Seventh Divison was not yet concentrated at Ostend. Antwerp fell, not on the 4th, as it would have fallen but for Mr. Winston Churchill's intervention, but on the 10th. This intervention, made possible by our own command of the sea, was as decisive as Galliéni's intervention on September 6, for it saved the Channel ports and the left of the allied army, but the only thing that the British public knew was that the Naval Brigades had their bayonets tied on with string and that this was contrary to Field Service Regulations.

I arrived at the Crystal Palace to find these matters in grave debate. War, like a storm at sea, washes up all the debris of the

past to the comparative safety of the shore. I met at the Crystal Palace all the types with which I was to become familiar at Mudros, at Imbros, on the Gallipoli beaches, and at Abbeville, Doullens, Boulogne and Aldershot. There is a lot to be said for sailors, a good deal to be said for regular soldiers, and perhaps even something to be said for temporary soldiers. But there is nothing whatever, in my vocabulary at least, bad enough for the imitation regular officer, that race of pretentious scatter-brained smart alecks who accumulate at the depots of all nations at war.[1]

The Crystal Palace depot had been formed in mid-September to take the flood of recruits intended for the Army but for whom no place could be found, and it had, as its nucleus of senior officers, a number of R.N.V.R. Captains and Commanders, whose seniority, in age and infirmities, precluded them from service elsewhere, or, in effect, from any service at all. For they knew nothing, and meant to learn nothing, about military matters. The same, I fancy, was true even of the most august and exalted of our rulers at the Crystal Palace, although in some cases their quite genuine aloofness prevented any inquiry about anything at all. They talked occasionally on "discipline" to "young officers," whom they regarded from their eminence with a genial tolerance which did not include any social recognition. Indeed their only condescension to the practicalities of war was an occasional reference in their talks to venereal disease. One got the impression that they had read about it in a book, and felt bound to pass the information on to persons less wealthy than themselves and, of course, by reason of the lamentable circumstances of their upbringing, less able to resist the temptations of life in Sydenham.

I have never had the privilege of seeing our very superior

[1] The day after I wrote this I ran into Major General J. F. C. Fuller back from Abyssinia and was amused to hear that the same type (the popinjays, as he called them) had turned up in shoals at the Italian base at Asmara, and less than six months ago he and I saw a good few of them true to type at Salamanca.

officers since 1915; so I am unable to say whether I was right in feeling that they regarded the temporary officers as having taken an ungentlemanly advantage of the national emergency in applying for commissions. Perhaps not, but they have certainly forgotten about us all by now, and are, I am sure, sleeping more easily in consequence. However, the Commodore and the "Sea Captains" (as we called the R.N.V.R. veterans) were charming, if aloof, and regretted their presence at the Crystal Palace at least as sincerely as the Admiralty would have regretted their presence anywhere else. They are not the subject of my diatribe. Nor would I include the doctors, whose generosity in the matter of sick leave was beyond praise. "Are you applying for sick leave to-day?" asked Hugh Kingsmill on one occasion. "No, I don't feel well enough," I replied.

The subject of my complaint was that large class of officers who had seen a little inadvertent service in some earlier war and were determined not to see any more, or who had spent a year or so in the Army or Navy and had retained of this experience only a general knowledge of the ropes and a capacity for conveying their contempt for those less fortunately equipped for the battle for places in the shade. I learnt during the war the ease with which the ordinary successful careerist can end at the base, but the soldier of genius begins there. Such men have the real military talent. Given opportunities as well as genius they may become A.D.C.'s and A.P.M.'s, and in some cases even opportunity is unnecessary. I remember meeting, in a pleasant little village behind Abbeville in 1916 (a glance at the map will show that to be behind Abbeville was in itself a proof of genius), a charming young man, immaculately dressed and wearing the insignia of a famous regiment and several decorations. I asked him, over a drink, what he was, and was told, "Oh, I'm the D.L.O." I showed my ignorance evidently in my face. "Divisional Laundry Officer," he explained, with quiet

pride, but without a touch of hauteur. He wanted me, in spite of all, to be at my ease.

The Crystal Palace was full of embryo D.L.O's and they were all highly uneasy at Mr. Winston Churchill's impertinence in daring to send untrained troops on active service to Antwerp. Their uneasiness was quite unnecessary. The troops sent to Antwerp were ardent and enthusiastic. Had they been riff-raff they would not have been sent. Nor, I must explain in passing, was it Mr. Winston Churchill's fault—still less the fault of their fine and stubborn commander, Sir Archibald Paris—that three battalions out of twelve were interned in Holland. The fault, the natural human mistake was Lord Mottistone's, for he gave the order for the retirement of the 1st Naval Brigade to Victor Campbell, commanding the Drake battalion, under the impression that he was Commodore Henderson. Much was made of it at the time, but the object of the operation (an object of incalculable importance) had been brilliantly achieved, and the only result, in terms of realities, of the mistake, was to save the lives of many officers and men, including among them Charles Morgan, the novelist, whose elder and equally gifted brother was a company-commander in my own battalion and was killed in our first engagement on June 19th, 1915.

The internment of the first Hawke, Collingwood and Benbow battalions of the Naval Division, was, from another point of view also, a blessing in disguise. It meant that a decision had to be taken immediately and publicly as to the future of Winston's Army, and once taken, there could be no turning back. So it was decided to find three new battalions from the Army recruits at the Crystal Palace and to arrange for the systematic training of the necessary officers and N.C.O's for these battalions and for the supply of drafts to the whole Naval Division when they took the field. Thus there came into being out of a hasty, though inspired, improvisation, a military organisation unique in character, which was to stand the strain

of four years of war far better than the products of the orthodox Army system, which carefully distributed each battalion of each regiment to a different division, and thus left each division dependent for its drafts on a dozen or more depots, and charged the depots with the responsibility for supplying drafts to a dozen or more divisions.

The ideal military organisation of the future will, if we remain sane, conform pretty closely to the Naval Division pattern. The war of 1914 was the last infantry war. Even Lewis guns were a luxury. We fought on our feet, with rifles, revolvers and bombs and relied for our rations and ammunition on horse transport. The infantry officer had to be able to look after horses and men, and that was all. Nowadays, with mechanised transport and mechanised machine guns, the infantry officer will have to be a competent mechanical engineer first and foremost. Further, the increased mobility which is the sole purpose of mechanisation, involves turning the supply services into genuine fighting units. The horse could give the man many hours start and come up when the fighting was over, but it will be a different matter keeping pace with mechanical vehicles. In emergencies, as the Abyssinian campaign has shown us, refuelling and victualling may be done from the air, but this cannot be the general rule. It seems likely in the circumstances that the personnel of a mechanised brigade or division will have to be, in any prolonged campaign, practically interchangeable and to be able to take their places in the fighting line, in front of it or behind it, with equal proficiency. If this is not to lead to inextricable confusion, it looks as if the old organisation is doomed, and as if the brigade, self-contained with all ancillary services, is the smallest effective unit alike for the purpose of administration, discipline and training and fighting efficiency. But we are unlikely to discover this for some months after the outbreak of war, by which time, if the prophets are correct, it will be too late.

If wiser men than I can find a technical answer to this problem,[1] there is one factor in favour of the change which ought to outweigh all technical considerations, and that is that war is only tolerable fun under some such organisation as we enjoyed in 1914-18. National war, I repeat, is not an affair for politicians and soldiers; it is, on the contrary, the one occasion when the ordinary citizen comes into his own, and the ordinary citizen dislikes being messed about, only he describes the process differently. If he has got to go out and be killed, he likes to do it in pleasant company, by which he means, since man is a gregarious animal, nothing more exacting and impossible than that he likes to remain with people whom he knows, whose eccentricities he has learned to put up with, whose tempers he had learned to avoid, whose small and harmless conceits he has learnt to flatter. He likes to know the people on his right and on his left, the people who bring his rations, the officers with whom he may have to serve on working parties or even in the supreme misfortune of battle. Uncongenial company is the chief horror of war, and to an Englishman all strange company is uncongenial. The regular army officer gets over the difficulty by keeping his profession rigidly closed except to men of a certain stamp and class. Unfortunately his simple and logical way of dividing the world into those who were at Sandhurst or Woolwich and those who were not, while it solves his own social problems to his own satisfaction, leaves those of the rest of the world unsolved. Indeed his attitude to-day, eighteen years after the close of the last war, is just precisely what I remember it in 1914, and it is well illustrated by a conversation I heard last summer at the Athenæum, when we were entertaining the "Senior." A palpable colonel was in difficulties, because he couldn't get the

[1] And I doubt if they can. The mixed mechanised column of 2000–3000 men of all arms is proving in Spain to be the only suitable fighting unit for offensive warfare under modern conditions. These columns are often referred to by war correspondents as "divisions," a fact which accounts for the ridiculous estimates of the numbers of Franco's foreign volunteers.

drink he wanted, and was trying gallantly to find a way out of his troubles by a little geniality. "Tell me," he asked the waiter, "was your Secretary in the Army or the Navy?" The waiter explained, with what I felt to be a quite adequate note of apology, that as far as he knew he hadn't been in either. The question, so obviously misunderstood, was repeated, with that slightly irritated but well-controlled precision with which the English talk to foreigners. But the answer, alas, was the same. The colonel faced with the courage of his profession a revelation so disconcerting that only years of practised self-control enabled him to preserve his sang-froid. "Neither in the Army nor the Navy," he said, in a tone whose poignancy still lives with me, "neither in the Army nor in the Navy. Good God!"

Oddly enough the only remark of an equally fine vintage which I have heard came across the Carlton Club smoking room after breakfast a few days later. I missed the beginning of the conversation but couldn't help hearing the superb rhetorical question with which it closed. "Tell me something I've always wanted to know. What does a fellow do in the country if he doesn't hunt or shoot? Just messes about, I suppose."

Hearing this, I realised in a flash, the psychological attitude of so many regular officers to so many less regular officers during the last war. We were, to them, "just messing about."

We suffered little or none of this in the Naval Division, because the regular service element was provided by the Royal Marines, who combined very great efficiency with the more free and easy manners of the Ward Room. They were, of course, used to serving always with officers and men who did not belong to their Corps, and were not shocked into defensive silence by the spectacle of people behaving "differently." Still, much as we admired and liked the R.M.L.I. officers, it was a good thing for the Division that we were not assimilated to

them, for the strength of the Navy Division lay in the fact that we had no barrack-square training to drill us into conventional shapes. By the necessity of the case we had to be taught primarily to teach others.

The genius of the Crystal Palace depot was Lieutenant, now Lt.-Colonel J. H. Levey, once a famous Sergt.-instructor of the Scots Guards and the most effective personality I met during the war. If ever any man deserved recognition it was he, for he created, off his own bat and by the sheer force of his personality, one of the four most famous fighting Divisions of the British Army. The ranking, I may add, is that of the German, not of the British, War Office.

On any statistical computation the Naval Division was richer in personalities than any comparable formation in the British Army. It was thus an excellent stroke of fortune that it should have been so trained and organised as to give personality free play. At one time, fairly early in the campaign, every battalion in the two Naval Brigades was commanded by an officer who had begun the war as a civilian. Levey was a teacher of genius, handicapped by no illusions. He had spent too many years trying to teach the officers the rudiments of their profession to imagine that these things were beyond the grasp of civilians. Rather, he realised that he had in his classes many men of proved ability and knowledge of the world whom he could teach at exactly twice the regulation pace. The rest of us had to make the pace or go under. Expressed in terms of shoe leather, it recalls the sight of the Duke of Manchester's feet seen through the soles of a pair of patent leather boots after three hours under Levey on the gravel of the Crystal Palace. The next time I saw the Duke was in the *Daily Mirror*: "Distinguished officer recuperating at Cannes." He was not one of Levey's conquests, but the rest of us capitulated, not without many murmurs but because there was no alternative. I well remember one day when we were being taught the elements of trench digging,

and I found myself unavoidably with a pick-axe in my hand with which I had to make some sort of show. Hoping to be well out of sight I made a gesture or two with it, only to be startled out of my life by a roar of brilliantly-simulated anger. "What are you doing there, Mr. Jerrold? Any one would think you had never worked with a pick-axe before in your life."

The only time I ever saw Levey at a loss was when he asked Dawe after a long field day where Dawe's military talents had, to say the least of it, been inadequately displayed, and when he had received more than his share of Levey's attention in consequence, what he thought of the day's work. "The *men* were magnificent," Dawe answered gravely, and this timely display of the "right spirit" permitted no reply. Two born tacticians had met, and honours were easy. Dawe joined Levey's staff as Musketry Officer almost immediately after.

Before coming myself under Levey's lash, I spent three months with the Nelson Battalion (one of those which had escaped scatheless from Antwerp) in Lord Northbourne's park at Betteshanger and at Portsmouth Naval Barracks. This was as near as I ever got to the horrors which newly joined subalterns must have experienced in ultra-regular depots—the kind of thing of which Robert Graves wrote in his optimistically-entitled, *Good-bye to All That.*

The Naval Barracks was nearly my financial undoing, for I used to eat figs and cream every day for lunch, only to discover that the cream was an extra and that the cost of it depleted my income by exactly 25 per cent—from 4/- to 3/- a day. On the top of this I made out my drink chits for whiskies and gins instead of half whiskies and gins (a whisky being what mere civilians call a "double") and this absorbed far more than the rest of my earnings. The trouble, of course, was that a sub-lieutenant in the Navy is only a sub-lunatic schoolboy (he is not even a Ward Room officer) and is not supposed to have anything but "pocket money," nor, for that matter, is he

allowed to spend more than £2 a month on drinks. Most of our sub-lieutenants on the contrary were nearer thirty than twenty, many of them were over thirty, none of them spent less than £2 a week on drinks and many of them could have spent £2 a day and been none the worse for it.

My chief friend in the Nelson Battalion, for instance, was Clyde Evans, a sailor of fortune, who had navigated one of Rozhesturnsky's battleships to the East, and had been on the bridge during the fatal battle of Tsushima, which decided the fate of the Czars and opened the gates of Asia to Japan. Poker was the staple occupation of the Russian officers on that flagship, and no distinction appeared between night and day. It had been, Evans told me, a grim experience, sharing the fate of that doomed Armada and the society of those conscienceless men sentenced to death. What freak of fate had put Evans in the way of such strange employment we were never told, except that he happened to be in Great Fish Bay out of a job when the fleet put in to coal. Had he been as fortunate on June 4 at Gallipoli as he was at Tsushima he must have risen to high command, for he had all the coolness and audacity with none of the characteristic defects of the adventurer.

Two other original characters were fellow-subalterns of the same company, Tom Price of Dulwich and the Metropolitan Police, the first police constable to receive commissioned rank during the war, and A. V. W. Cotter, who had been, until the outbreak of war, United States Deputy Consul General at Munich, under Gavan Duffy, another rebellious Irishman.

At Portsmouth we were joined for two days by Rupert Brooke, who had, however, applied to rejoin the more distinguished Hood Battalion, where Bernard Freyberg, Arthur Asquith, Denis Browne and Charles Lister formed a brilliant nucleus to which our miscellaneous company of babes and beachcombers and adventurers could offer no rival attractions. The most remarkable thing about Rupert Brooke in uniform

was that he looked exactly like everybody else. I saw him one evening in the Billiard Room in the Naval Barracks reading the Poetry Review under the glassy eyes of two admirals, but despite the clue I failed to recognise him and went over to ask him if he knew whether Brooke had arrived. Historical accuracy compels me to record his very great annoyance at my ignorance of so important a fact, but when I made a suitable apology, he was most pleasant. His was, to me, a very rarefied charm; like his poetry, which always reminds me of water artificially clarified and refrigerated, flowing musically over imported marble from the quarries of Pentelicon—pure, fresh, brilliant and classical. And *Grantchester* is, of course, a charming scholar's paradox; the condescensions of genius are seldom so graceful. Happily his few patriotic poems are as different from *Grantchester* as cheese from chalk. They come from the heart, and the noble lines quoted on the Naval Division Memorial on Horse Guards Parade belong to our literature. But Brooke was neither a man of the town, nor of the soil, nor of the Senate, neither Horace nor Virgil nor Juvenal. He was pure silver age, cultivating the emotions as peasants cultivate their vines in happier climates and economies than ours. There is a beautiful line of his, from a poem never completed, which he gives in a letter written on the way to the Aegean to Elizabeth Asquith: "In Avons of the heart her rivers run." The theme was to be England, of course, but an England which was real because it was Shakespeare's, whereas simpler people like Shakespeare because he is English. How differently Pope's "On Avon's banks, where flowers eternal blow." That is true English, investing the mortal dreamings of man with the eternity of natural beauty. As with Tennyson, I cannot quite resist the impression that Brooke liked the look of things rather than the reality, and the sound of words which recalled the look far better than either. The other day on a visit to Cecil Aldin at Mallorca, I walked across half a dozen

fields bordered with asphodel. This confirmed my suspicions of Tennyson. No one with a visual memory could have so desecrated the Elysian valleys as to carpet them with those hideous flowers. But perhaps modern youth is too busy eating its own lotus to appreciate the allusion.

Kipling, on the contrary, whom I was brought up to despise (after all Kipling was not a Liberal) spoke a language which goes straight to the mind and heart of millions of kindly people, because it came from a mind and heart profoundly simple but containing immense reserves of thought and feeling. Just after my talk with Brooke, when he told me that he had insisted on being transferred from my battalion because there was no one in it to whom he could possibly talk, I was drilling with a party of junior officers at Whale Island, when, during an interval, the news came through of the loss of Cradock's squadron at Coronel. I made some conventional remark to the Petty Officer Instructor who was in charge of the "Squad." "Well, sir," he said, "it's the price of Admiralty." Kipling could talk to that man, but Brooke could not.

I could not help at the time contrasting the ethereal and sensitive Brooke with the shrewd, acquisitive and ruthless W. L. George, and wishing that it were possible to combine the two men in one electrifying personality; planned energy harnessed to the service of beauty, and the deep and sympathetic understanding of ordinary men and women, which made George so excellent a craftsman, added to those rarer intuitions which made Brooke, in brilliant flashes, a great poet.

There was to be, however, little time for these abstract speculations. By November, the noisiest rumours of war had become audible, which meant, of course, that our ears had become attuned to the new rhythm of armies on the march, of governments in flight, and peoples in exile, just as later they became attuned to jazz, short skirts and bad language. We were getting cured of the charming illusion that we were each

making our individual contribution to the cause, just as we were getting cured of the absurd illusion that our tiny little army had been the decisive factor in the first crash of Armageddon. In other words, even the youngest of us was beginning to grow up.

We had always, in the Naval Division, a better appreciation of the scale and tendency of the war than the ordinary run of New Army officers, because we had been flung into the battle earlier in dramatic circumstances, on our own and by ourselves. On our own we remained, even in England. We had no regiments behind us, no home life, so to speak. We were orphans of the storm, and when one is young and healthy half the pleasure of a storm is to be left to fight it alone. Another pleasant and wise determination of our foster-parents (for both the Admiralty and the War Office denied paternity) had been to ask for candidates for commissions between 25 and 35. The result was that we were quite free from the public school and undergraduate atmosphere.[1] This was fortunate, for public schoolboys as a class would have been quite incapable of handling the fleet reserve stokers or Tyneside miners who formed the nucleus of the rank and file of the Division. This is, I know, heresy, and if Sir Henry Newbolt were pope I should suffer instant excommunication. It is not, however, true from my experience that the English soldier wants to "be led." What he wants is to be intelligently provided for. I fall back on René Quinton's profound maxim—"an order merely passed on has not been executed." "Mine not to reason why," is no doubt a sure password into the Kingdom of Heaven but it creates an uncommonly large queue at the gates. I claim no military distinction, but I am at least proud that the first signal I sent from the front line trenches in France (to the brigade headquarters to which we were attached) began with the words, "Regret unable to comply with your order. . . ." That is the

[1] With a few exceptions like myself whose presence was due to service influence.

kind of thing the soldier expects of his officers. They don't want to be led like sheep to the slaughter even by good cricketers. I claim no personal credit for this episode because I sent the signal in the name of my colonel, Leslie Wilson (now Governor of Queensland) on whose support I could rely if what I thought was necessary. The prompt dispatch of so excellent a message merely shows that I had had the rudiments of an intelligent military education in the preceding eighteen months. The doctrine that orders have to be executed blindly —carry out the order first, talk about it afterwards—is essential to the conduct of active operations by the men actually engaged in carrying them out, but in a campaign where orders originate miles behind the lines from a vast admistrative machine, minds on the spot must be allowed to work if lives are not to be needlessly thrown away and efficiency ruinously impaired. A readiness to die yourself is no adequate substitute for a resolute determination to see that your men have the best possible chance of remaining alive and well. It was through these characteristics incidentally that the Naval Division first won a reputation in France, for at the Battle of Ancre, Commander Bernard Freyberg led his battalion in the attack in direct contravention of the orders issued by the Divisional Commander. Without his personal leadership, the issue of the battle and the history of the 1917 campaign in France would have been different. The characteristic and wholesome indiscipline of the Naval Division was of course very largely due to the age and diversity of the officers. I recall actors, bookmakers, remittance men, barristers, city magnates, engineers, poets, journalists, musicians, men about town—all good of their kind. There were even a handful of soldiers and sailors but all of the strictly unprofessional sort, of whom the perfect example was George Ramsay Fairfax, who had left the Navy to serve with the Yeomanry in South Africa, had gone out with a machine gun detachment which he financed him-

self (ten years before any one had ever heard of such a thing) to Somaliland in 1903 and had, before he joined us in 1915, been executive officer of an armed merchant cruiser at sea. He ended his military career with yet another arm, as Brigadier General of Tanks. In the interval between 1903 and 1914 he had explored the Blue Nile and founded with E. S. P. Haynes (whom also I was to know later) the Divorce Law Reform Union. I remember meeting Fairfax only once in London while on leave, and then he left me suddenly to stop a runaway coal cart. The two things he knew nothing about were drill and military law. In France he was known over a wide area as the Prisoner's Friend because no verdict of any court martial over which he presided (and it happened for a time that he presided over a great many) was ever confirmed.

The great ones persuaded themselves somehow, and have by now persuaded half the rest of the world, that they won the war *in spite of people like George Fairfax; not to mention* the politicians, the lawyers, the munition makers, the French, the Americans and all the rest of the crowd who muscled in on the great adventure. The regular army and staff saw us through. It was they who won the decisive battles of 1918. Poor old Ferdinand Foch issued his "directives" to which no one paid any attention. It was they who won. And they have been winning ever since. At re-union dinners the note of triumph gets more assured as the years roll on and gallant old generals whose names were mud from June 30th, 1916, to November 10th, 1918, come forward to receive the plaudits of the middle-aged veterans who imagine they are recapturing the sentiments of their ardent and adventurous youth. From all these reunions only one group is missing—the great and gallant who were the legitimate descendants of the Elizabethan pirates, of the soldiers of fortune of the 17th and 18th centuries, of the pioneers and frontiersmen of the 19th century, who, without a War Office to look after them, and before Staffs were ever heard

of, established in the face of all the probabilities the great English anarchy which we used to call the British Empire. Some of them went through the war with a flask of whisky, some with a Bible, some with a volume of Horace, some with a volume of Bernard Shaw, most with a pack of cards and a cheque book in their pockets. The only things they never carried were Field Service Regulations or a Field Marshal's baton. But they were the fighters.

You can win a national war with a conscript army if your regimental officers are of the same class as the rank and file, or you can win it with volunteers officered by adventurers; you will never fight it from the War Office with a professional officer corps controlling the destinies of a people and reinforcing itself from a mediocracy of successful careerists and yes-men.

Looking back from this date when the next war—the crime which has not yet been committed although we know the criminals—is in process of being planned, we ought to thank God that we were not ready for the last war. Had we been ready there would have been no Naval Division, no niche for our babes and beachcombers, our poets and scholars and musicians and soldiers of fortune, no battalion with sergeants of sixty-four and sixteen side by side, with Alan Herbert to write our secret history week by week in *Punch* and half Downing Street to fight the other half for our right to grow beards and call ourselves sailors, we who barely knew the way across Channel because we had so little leave.

And this is truth, not romance. For we might have been turned into soldiers. And so might the rest of the British Army. In which case . . . well, history will give the answer to that question when the next war has been fought, unless by any lucky chance we are again unprepared.

CHAPTER FIVE

RUPERT BROOKE AND AFTER

THE politicians have recently completed, not without unction, the betrayal of the men who won and held Gallipoli peninsula. A settlement, we are told, by consent. By whose consent? The arrangements, we are told, are satisfactory; the graves, we are assured, "will be kept in perfect order," a decorous feature, no doubt, in the panorama of fortifications closing the gates of the Mediterranean to Christian fleets. Truly a symbolic conclusion to the great appeasement. And not even Mr. Winston Churchill to cry: "Varus, give me back my legions!" No, we like it. It seems that it is a good stroke of diplomacy. It is followed (July 29th, 1936) by an appeal for men between seventeen and twenty-five to join a new Infantry reserve. One wonders why? For what, precisely, are these young men to fight? Or is it, perhaps, sufficient to assure them that their graves "will be kept in perfect order" by the enemy to whom they will, in the due course of "peaceful settlement," be inflexibly betrayed?

Yet it is not only now that we begin to hear the note of doom. Early in May, 1915, I wrote home from Gallipoli that the end of the campaign could be read in the fourth book of Thucydides, that story which tells, in the guise of the defeat of an army, the death of a dream. John North has recently written a poignant and faithful narrative of the Gallipoli campaign. He is the first detached observer to mark that it bore the handwriting of destiny. Men dominate events; Parliamentary machines yield to them. Cabinets slumber in the midst of them. Suspended halfway, in 1915, between the

rule of men and the rule of machines, the issue hung in the balance, while some men suffered and died in the hope that other men at last might assert their manhood. Only one did. Mr. Winston Churchill, denied the power to save the lives he had staked or to justify the risks he had taken, went as a regimental officer to the trenches and remained there as long as men remained in the trenches at Gallipoli. No one has ever pointed out what was certainly not a coincidence. He received the news of the decision to abandon the peninsula in a dug-out in the front line. He opened the envelope, read it, and put it in his pocket. "The cowards!" he was heard to murmur, no one knowing the reason why, or who the cowards were. They know now.

For cowardice it was, *inter alia*, which prolonged the war till 1918 and ruined for ever the prestige of British arms and British Government in the East. Never at any time would they play the game with appropriate stakes. When I make the charge of cowardice I do not exclude the alternative explanation, in certain cases more adequate, of treachery. There were men in high places who willed the failure of the campaign. But there were only two at the start who were prepared to stake everything they valued upon its success, Mr. Winston Churchill and Sir Ian Hamilton. Among all that crowd of celebrities, only two men. Others were to emerge, notably Sir Roger Keyes, who would have risked everything even at the eleventh hour and was forbidden. But the principle of limited liability held the field for the first few fateful months. Old ships, old admirals, old generals, old guns (we had the original guns of the famous L. Battery worn out in France, and two Maxims of antique pattern from the Imperial Services Museum), and raw reinforcements. In May, 1915, the British Empire had only put a quarter of a million men in the field, but of the reinforcements sent out to Gallipoli in mid-summer half were physically unfit. Of one Naval Division

draft sent out to us as early as July, 90 per cent. went sick in a week. About everything connected with the campaign there was a sinister suggestion of the unnatural. Every one met was somebody's friend. We would have given them all for half a dozen men who were the enemies of the Turks!

Even the Naval Division, held in reserve for occasions like this—fools to step in where brass-hatted angels feared to tread —were sent out piecemeal and without artillery. None could he spared for sideshows. Even then, only nine battalions were allowed to sail in February—the three missing battalions, Hawke, Benbow and Collingwood, whose prototypes had been interned in Holland, were still without rifles.

I had been transferred from the Nelson to the Hawke battalion in January. Whether the Hawke or the Nelson was intended to be strengthened by this event seemed to me at the time doubtful. Looking back, I imagine that I was regarded as somewhat above the average of incompetence by one officer who shall be nameless, but who should certainly have been, had incompetence been the issue, a good enough judge. I was sorry to leave the friendly battalion, particularly as, the day before I left it, the battalion had come under the command of Lt.-Col. Eveleigh of the Royal Marines, a man of delightful simplicity of character, a fine officer, a staunch Papist, and the only soldier I ever met who would begin a sentence with what I had always regarded as the apocryphal "Damme, Sir. . . . "

I have told elsewhere the short and simple annals of the Hawke Battalion, in a book published under that title and long since out of print. The best of it was that part of the story which was told in William Ker's letters from Gallipoli, a contemporary and constructive denial of that mood of despairing disgust later attributed to all intellectual young men caught up in the maelstrom of war. We of the Hawke Battalion were certainly not "caught up." If ever there was a body of young men determined to be shot at it was to be found in our

battalion. Three of our officers had already been interned and had escaped from Holland; another, Robert Shelton, had most gallantly disobeyed orders and refused to cross the Dutch frontier, managing to make his own way out of Belgium. I have never discovered how he got through. I can only imagine, knowing him so well, that he hadn't got a map. With one, he must have lost his way. Leslie Wilson, our Colonel, was a Territorial gunner and a member of Parliament, two exceptionally good reasons for not serving in an infantry battalion. George Fairfax I have mentioned before. Ker himself had escaped with the utmost difficulty from the motor-boat patrol. A. V. W. Cotter, who came with me from the Nelson, had escaped with even greater difficulty through Germany on a bicycle in the second week of August, 1914. Even I, who never claimed to be a fire-eater, had the choice between a commission in a Cyclists' Battalion then en route for India and a commission in the Naval Division. Indeed I must have created something of a record, since I received three commissions, or rather the offer of them, on the same day, the third being with the Buffs. Far be it for me to suggest, there are too many alive who know the contrary, that we were a battalion of young heroes. There was never a battalion less heroically inclined. Heroism, as René Quinton has pointed out, is not different in degree but in kind from ordinary bravery. I hope we were as brave as ordinary decent people should be; but the hero is not brave. The hero is not a man who rises above fear but a man who welcomes danger as a bride. The hero is fundamentally uncivilised, neither hating life nor loving it. We who loved life—after all, we were young—were just ordinary civilised people, with virtue, not sanctity, as the inherent limit of our potentialities. To such as we who were not heroes, this vision of God, revealed only to heroes and little children, was hidden, and only by grace and mercy desired.

The Naval Division had many heroes, and very trouble-

some they were to those in authority over them, but they were not among my friends in the Hawke Battalion, with one possible exception. That exception was Vere Harmsworth, certainly troublesome, wayward, yet with something of the direct simplicity of childhood. He was one of the escapers—escapers into battle. He escaped twice and it was enough. He was killed on November 13th, 1916, at Beaucourt, proud of responsibility recklessly assumed. He was the youngest of us all, and the most fortunate, it seemed, but he had an untamed will which issued in a provoking obstinacy. As Popes have despaired of Saints, so did Colonels and Adjutants despair of Vere Harmsworth. He did exactly as he liked and said what he thought, which often sounded foolish enough. His mind knew no comparatives. When he was a Company Commander he wanted to give his men everything and brushed aside as mere verbal jugglery the protests of other Company Commanders not in a position to do the same. He disliked romantic nature, ruins and politicians. He was essentially modern, a builder without a plan. He might have become an eccentric, a millionaire, a saint or a dictator, for all of which a large amount of obstinate folly is necessary.

Our other character was the already famous "A. P. H.," of whom I saw more, as we were for a time in the same company and went out on the same transport. Many of our works and days are to be found in his novel, *The Secret Battle*, though I am happy to say that the central figure of that great romance, "the bravest man I ever knew," whom "they" shot at dawn, was not one of our own nor of any other battalion. A. P. H., in that word "they" depicts himself as the essential journalist, necessarily outside his subject. This is not a defect, it is merely a difference of attitude; the difference between Arnold Bennett and Galsworthy on the one hand and Conrad and H. G. Wells on the other. Herbert saw the war as something conducted by "they" and fought by "we,"—A. P. H. in this

novel never gets outside the junior officer's skin. If he had been a Colonel, as he should have been, he would have written with the same humorous bitterness of the vagaries of subalterns and company commanders as he did in *The Secret Battle* of Colonels and Brigadiers, because they would have annoyed him and annoyed him in just the same way. That is the secret of good descriptive journalism, to write from your personal experience and not to try and imagine what you have not seen. A. P. H. only departed from this golden rule when, to give a twist to his tale, he had his gallant young hero shot at dawn. It was an unfortunate departure, particularly as some of the facts of the tragedy were based on a real case, in which the circumstances were different.

In any case, the one tragedy on the heroic scale which the war witnessed was not secret but played out before the eyes of the whole world. It was the Gallipoli campaign itself. It was at Cape Helles and Anzac and Suvla that the defeat of traditional civilisation was accomplished. We are to-day only beginning to understand it. It was not essentially a military disaster. We won the war in spite of it. But it was an English defeat, the first and most decisive of those defeats of democracy which have led to the universal anarchy of 1937. Nature abhorring a vacuum.

No one will say to-day that the plan was misconceived. The battle was not between Sir Ian Hamilton and General Liman von Sanders. It was a dog-fight between the British system and Mustapha Kemal Bey. It was the man who recovered from the bite.

When I say the "system" I do not mean only, or even mainly, the politicians. I mean the system which necessitates that "dear old So-and-so" must be given his chance when every one knows that he is incapable of using his chance. I mean the system which kept (and still keeps) young officers subalterns from ten to sixteen years while they turn from

ardent and brilliant young men into case-hardened careerists. I mean the system which kept men already more than middle-aged in horribly visible terror of censure from their elderly and dyspeptic chiefs, terror so abject that they think only of the reasons that they can give in writing, never of the ineluctable necessities of war. Never attack by night—if it fails you will be blamed for taking chances. Never attack without artillery preparation—you will be blamed for not attempting to cut the wire and destroy the machine-gun emplacements. Never hold your trenches lightly; if you lose them you will be referred to Field Service Regulations. Never take a risk of any sort except with written orders. Never disobey written orders however disastrous the consequences of obeying them. Be covered—only expose your men. Never explain, never apologise, never resign!

Just before the Battle of the Ancre, when we had been on working parties day and night for weeks and our men were literally sick with strain and fatigue (and it takes a good deal to tire Tyneside miners) I was ordered to send four hundred men on a midnight working-party in the front line. I had four hundred and eighty men in camp, of whom four hundred had been back from an all-day working party only a couple of hours. I refused to send them, and was sent for to Brigade Headquarters to see the Staff Captain. "Why do you never ante-up?" he asked me, "Every one else always antes-up. Believe me, you're making a mistake. These things get noticed." How true; all I had to do was to write out an order and go to bed and be blessed for my efficiency. Luckily I had a Colonel who would not have allowed me any such easy laurels. Bless him!

Before the Hawke Battalion was allowed to sail, on May 6th, 1915, the landing of April 25th, so brilliant a feat of arms that it stands out still the foremost in all those four years of desperate

gallantry, was over. We had got ashore. But in that brief fortnight the evil and inspired rumours of failure had begun to percolate, and by the time we reached the Mediterranean they had accumulated to terrifying proportions. We had sailed fairly optimistically through a stormy Bay, past Gibraltar to Malta, to arrive at the height of the Mediterranean spring, and to find in that suburb of the East the theatrical contrast of light and shade, the pale reflections of the life of the East, the beggars, the noise, the glare, the bad lace, the foul cigars, and the grateful shelter of the Union Club, to which temporary officers were still admitted—the war had hardly begun. But every stay-at-home staff officer's tongue was busy with the misdeeds of generals, admirals and politicians. It was by then May 12th.

We had a pleasant enough voyage, spent for the most part drilling and drinking, and in the evening, interminably singing. I have often wondered about that singing. Did we sing because we were cheerful, or because we were drunk, or do young men travelling to war always sing? I trust that I may never be able, with more mature powers of observation, to find an answer to this question.[1]

The songs as I remember them varied from Victorian ballads, "Songs of Araby," etc., through Kipling to highbrow early English songs with an Oxford accent—"The Seven Point Rangers" I remember, because no one ever could, and the earliest of A. P. H.'s famous compositions set to the quadruple chant:

We shall not sheathe the sword/ which we háve not/
lightly/ drawn//
Until Belgium has recovered all/° and m̀ore than/ all that/
she has sacrificed/°
Until France is ad/equátely sec/uréd//against the/ ménace/

[1] But perhaps I can, now, for I heard this singing again at Salamanca, after dinner, in March, 1937.

of ag/gression;° until the rights of the smaller nationálit/ies of Europe// have been placed upon an únass/aila/ble found/ation;° until the military dóm/ination of/Prussia// is whólly and/ final/ly des/troyéd.°

The Hawke Battalion contribution was traditionally and inevitably in the mock-heroic or mock-sentimental vein, and was regarded even in the security of the *Ivernia's* dining-room as more than a little unsound, particularly by our friends of the ill-fated Collingwood Battalion, destined to massacre futile and final (for the Battalion was broken up) less than three weeks later. They were commanded during their brief life by a very gallant officer, Captain Spearman, R.N., who was, however, a good bit of a martinet and certainly bore no humorist near his throne. He had chosen his officers with the utmost perspicacity and they regarded our high spirits with regretful distrust. I need hardly say that they supplied the serious items in our musical programmes. The nearest link with our vulgar humanity we found in one or two ex-tea-planters who used to sing, "Put me somewhere East of Suez . . . Where there ain't no Ten Commandments, And a man can raise a thirst," with regretful gusto. Looking back on it, this strikes me as a little strange, for none of these excellent fellows could have recited the Ten Commandments, or refused a drink anywhere in the world. They suffered intermittently from malaria and spoke pityingly of the naval doctors who expected to cure "a man who'd lived out East" with anything less than twenty grains of quinine at a time. It was as if, we were asked to understand, some one had offered a member of the editorial staff of the *Pink 'un* a glass of milk and a bun at eleven o'clock in the morning.

When we got to Malta our tea-planters inevitably sighed for Port Said. If chance had taken us to Port Said, they would have turned the conversation, presumably, to Singapore, which

was a step in that progress which would at last have landed them back where they started, which was indubitably the long bar of the Trocadero, referred to invariably as the "Troc," and geographically described as "up West."

Fortunately we never saw them in Malta and forebore to ask them their experiences. Of ours, I recollect only a brilliant if one-sided dialogue between A. P. H. and a guide who waylaid us on our way back to the ship, offering to show us the "dancing girls." This A. P. H. optimistically tried to dismiss by replying very gravely that we didn't dance. A dialogue then ensued which must have ended (as we all hoped) in the guide explaining the facts of life to A. P. H. if time had not compelled our company commander to break it off before its climax.

From Malta to Mudros, the finest natural harbour in European waters, and only excelled elsewhere, I am told, by Sydney. To the layman, however, it was an unknown spot until Masefield immortalised it in his description of the setting-out of the Armada on April 24th, 1915. We stayed on board our transports in the harbour for a day or two, and for the first time received proper rifles, or relatively proper, for they were at least capable of taking Mark VI. ammunition, which was only two years out of date. That was typical of the attitude taken by the War Office to the only enterprise so far begun by the Allies which was inspired by the quality of strategic inspiration, which might have been not a side-show but a decisive campaign. Alas for the dream. Strategic imagination is a two-edged weapon. Failing, we failed before the eyes of the whole world.

We landed on the peninsula at midnight on May 24th, 1915. No experience could conceivably have been more romantic. In six hours we had changed from our comfortable transport to a battlefield already historic, still dangerous. If we slept we should wake up actually in sight of the enemy.

But there was no sleep for us that night, for this was war,

war according to the story-books. We wore helmets like the soldiers in Lady Butler's pictures, and we had to dig holes in the ground to hide in by day and to sleep in by night. The enemy had no aeroplanes and very little artillery, and so we had none either. All the resources of our great industries, which could have turned the scale in a month, had been forgotten, or rather they were being kept for the great break through on the Western Front in September, 1915. No aeroplanes, no artillery! Why, there wasn't even any whisky. Only a saucer of broken ground, covered in parts from the view of the enemy by a few trees, and intersected by three nullahs, two running roughly at right angles to our three lines of trenches, and one, the key position of the Kereves Dere, across the right flank of our projected advance, a barrier unsurmounted from the day we landed to the end of the campaign, though the French reached its edge in the battle of June 4th, and from thence the opposing armies solemnly looked at each other across a huge ravine without firing a shot.

This ground in which we were digging holes had been conquered at the point of the bayonet, in broad daylight, by infantry charging concealed machine guns. That was the simple and incredible story. We were three thousand more infantry, but now we had to charge an enemy entrenched. It was deceptively simple; when the day broke, and, moving out beyond the trees which reputedly concealed our whereabouts, we looked at the Turkish lines through field-glasses, it was more like an Academy picture than ever.

We thought we were important and we felt very brave merely because we were extremely uncomfortable. We hadn't learned that the first sign of efficiency in a soldier is that he has the ability to make himself comfortable in a day. This is untrue of some armies, notably of the Italian army, which is inured to disorder even more than to discomfort. But for a town-bred army the establishment of an orderly routine of

living is the first necessity. Personally I had left behind almost everything that was really essential, and only slowly acquired a tolerable wardrobe. I had imagined that the endurance of this discomfort was the hall-mark of the real enthusiast at war. By that standard I was D'Artagnan. Unfortunately not by any other. I found myself for a month or two surprised by my own inefficiency, notably in finding my way about. The only thing that pleased me was that I was not frightened.

I have often wondered since what it was precisely which gave me the perfectly correct impression (but, of course, subalterns should not get correct impressions, else no really good war would last) that the campaign was doomed. I fancy that it was the complete lack of concentration, the appearance of an indescribably complete disorder. There we were, the French on our right, the 42nd Division on our left; and on the left flank the 29th Division; all sprawling in holes on the ground. It was true that we got up periodically and went into trenches, only two miles away. Some of us went out every night on working parties even when we were out of the line. I well remember my first working party, being taken by the engineer officer in charge of the work up the central (Achi-Baba) nullah, not knowing in the least where I was going, or why. He knew where, but could hardly himself have said why. As I went up the very slippery path by the side of the stream, I stumbled. "Are you hit?" he asked in a bored voice without looking round. "Certainly not," I answered with some annoyance, as if it would have been a piece of inconceivable inefficiency had I allowed such a thing to happen. "I only wondered," he murmured, rather apologetically, and on we went. My annoyance, of course, was really caused by the shock to my romantic conceit. Clearly my being hit was, to every one else, a quite unimportant but intensely irritating incident. I hadn't realised that I was on the threshold of the modern world, where "Anything Goes." Gallipoli was the first place where

"anything went." One thing was as absurd as another. Even death had its rivals.

On June 4th, we all got up and dressed. We even had to have our whole possessions packed and our battalion transport ready to move forward to Constantinople. It was the last but one of the great frontal attacks at Cape Helles, the last and most futile of the attempts to carry Achi-Baba by direct assault. There was no "plan." We had been lying about on the peninsula since May 8th. We were now to slouch forward. We had a little artillery, which was supposed to cut the wire; for the rest, the Turks would either stay and fight or cut and run.

Those early battles on Gallipoli showed the British post-office system of leadership at its worst. Technical details apart, there was one order, and one only, to advance and occupy the enemy trenches. Generalship, we were told, would come into its own when the enemy trenches were captured. Then the Generals would come out on their horses and practice what they had learnt in the Sudan, on the North-West Frontier and in South Africa. That was the real war for which they were waiting as many miles behind the lines as the limited nature of our conquests admitted, in strict echelon, in strict order of seniority—Brigadiers, Divisional Generals, the Corps Commander and the Commander-in-Chief himself. The trenches, we were given to understand, were things for young men to deal with first. Hence the series of irritable Napoleons at bay, waiting, like the little Corsican before Acre, for the young men to make a breach in the fortifications. Then they would begin the great march to Constantinople. Had not they even, in their kindness, let us into the secret? We had maps of the road in our haversacks. The attack was, for them, only the beginning of a great adventure. Not so for us.

As on May 6th, May 7th and May 8th, so on June 4th. We were to attack in broad daylight in two or three densely

packed lines uphill against an enemy redoubtable in defence, and plentifully supplied with machine guns, and expert, as we were not, in rapid fire.

Their trenches were deep and well sited—we captured them six weeks later, six weeks too late. Our own were less foolproof and the Turks fired thousands of rounds of ammunition every night against our scanty sandbags. The noise of the bullets striking the parapet was like nothing so much as a fast rally in the racquet court at Queen's. They kept it up for hours sometimes, and we kept watch through loop-holes with an occasional glance over the top to make sure. The Turks, in fact, attacked only once and that very half-heartedly, at Cape Helles, between the middle of June and the beginning of January and after July they wasted no more ammunition. But, like our own staff, they were still enthusiastic in May and early June, and owing to the shortage of sandbags and our own ignorance in crowding our trenches (a man a yard in the front line was still the rule and there were still enough men), they caused a few casualites in our lines and many more in the communication trenches and at the dumps. Except on days of battle, however, they kept quiet from dawn till dusk. Their nightly anxiety was, unfortunately, quite superfluous, for our generals were determined never to attack except in broad daylight despite the fact that the whole of our trench system had been won by the simple process of moving forward quietly at night and digging in on ground denied to us in the great parade-ground assaults of May.

Personally I saw nothing of the battle of June 4th, as my battalion was in reserve. We moved up in the afternoon about a mile and halted for some hours, losing a few men from stray bullets and much amused by excited staff officers urging us to keep cool. The "battle" had been fought and lost in the early morning; the French had won and lost the key position on the Turkish left, after which a deadly enfilade fire made the

rest of our gains untenable, or so it was said. As if the explanation were adequate! It didn't seem to dawn on those who made it that it was damning. If that one position, called, if I remember rightly, the Haricot redoubt, was really capable of enfilading the rest of the Turkish line, why were some thousands of troops sent in broad daylight in close formation to attack the rest of the line, which could not be held if the attack on the right failed, and could be captured at negligible cost if it succeeded?

But this was war in 1915, not a war of positions, but a war held up by positions. If we couldn't capture them, how could our generals even begin their task? It seemed fairly evident to us, who were much closer to the enemy line than our generals were, that the same principles of concentration, surprise and manœuvre must be applied to an enemy entrenched as to an enemy in the open. It appeared so, too, to the Commander-in-Chief, who was, however, to be deceived a little longer by the bold enthusiasms of General Hunter Weston. However, let criticism be silent, for in all human probability, we were saved by the defeat of June 4th from a far greater disaster, because the total reserves available, had the break through taken place, were only a brigade or two. By the end of the day even that had ceased to exist, this handful of troops being required to relieve or reinforce the shattered battalions who had undertaken the attack.

I have often wondered exactly what process was envisaged in those magic words, "breaking through." What became of the enemy? Did you leave them behind or drive them before you, or did they just disappear into thin air? I fancy no one ever actually attempted to visualise the process. When the Naval Division made their historic attack at Beaucourt in November, 1916, they made the longest advance made in a single day since the beginning of the war against an entrenched enemy, and the distance was less than two miles. And at the

end of it the enemy was still entrenched in front of them. The phrase was, in fact, meaningless except on the assumption that the troops advancing in attack could move at twice the pace of the retreating enemy, suffering half the number of casualties. As the facts are precisely and mathematically the opposite, and as every one up to and perhaps even including the rank of Brigadier-General knew them to be so, the grandiloquent orders made for the capture of Achi-Baba on June 4 provoked only an amused titter, and there was no feeling anywhere that the very heavy casualties had been justifiably incurred.

The 42nd and the 29th Divisions had captured a trench or two, and the Nelson Battalion of the 2nd Naval Brigade had linked up the new and the old positions with a long diagonal trench which my company was sent to complete and to hold against an expected counter-attack on the early morning of June 5. It was a relief, after thirty-six hours of hanging about behind the lines or in the reserve trenches, to have something to do. Besides, it was to be our first sight of a battlefield, and possibly even of the enemy. How like would the reality be to the picture imagined? We had watched the early stage of the battle through field-glasses and realised the meaning of the fog of war. No one could guess what was happening and long before any news could come back the situation must have changed. In trench battles the brigade commander's place is either in the front line or at home. Three miles away he is merely a factor for delay interposed between the higher command and the fighting troops. It follows that no brigade commander should be over forty. An army with subalterns of forty and brigade commanders of sixty, as was ours in 1914–5 is an army decapitated, a sprawling trunk with no directing brain.

And that was just what it looked like. The only thing to be said was that the chaos was less than after the relatively

successful advance of July 13. On that occasion it was indescribable, just hundreds of men wandering about in the captured trench system in the burning sun, with corpses blackened and stinking lining the old Turkish firing steps, the sinister symmetry of their position being the only sign of any method at all. The redeeming feature of that occasion was A. P. Herbert's instruction to the sentries on his platoon frontage. "Remember, regard all Turks with the gravest suspicion."

June 5 was different. We had dug our trench freshly; the dead, my own friends, many of them, and notably Clyde Evans, were outside; there were no Turks because the Turks had not wanted that particular piece of ground, which was enfiladed by our own old front line. They had merely shot up a company of the Nelson Battalion while they were digging it and proceeded to shoot at us while we completed the work. They shot very few of us because the Nelson had done their work well. On the morning of the 5th, before we relieved the Nelson, the Turks had started throwing bombs at Evans's fleet reserve stokers as they were eating their breakfast. The stokers had retired to finish their breakfast in peace. Then they were ready to resume and without a word from any one they went back with the bayonet. "Come on, Bill, let's have a prick at the b . . . s" was the nearest to a word of command that any one had overheard.

Our own men, mainly Tyneside miners, were at least equally tough, but the Turks only worried us from a distance, and but for the fact that we had twice as many men as we needed and no one liked to tell us to take half of them away, we should have been reasonably comfortable.

So this was war, pointless, uninteresting, exasperating, but still not particularly dangerous. One curious incident relative to premonitions: on my first day at the Crystal Palace as orderly officer I had a London R.N.V.R. Petty officer as my

orderly sergeant, and had, in the course of my duties, to make the rounds of the Crystal Palace grounds at night time. Naturally, we talked. He was a pre-war volunteer; a clerk, I fancy, in an insurance office, very well-educated. I asked him why he didn't apply for a commission, and he said, very quietly, after an embarrassed silence, that it wasn't worth while. Then he was silent for quite a long time, so I asked him, more to make conversation than anything else, what he was going to do after the war. Then he said, rather apologetically, that he was going to be killed the first time he went into action, so that the question did not arise. He was perfectly happy about it. He just knew.

When we took over Nelson Avenue on June 5, I had to go back, being then second-in-command of the company, to see about our rations. When I got back about three hours later I found that this same Petty Officer, who was one of our platoon sergeants, had been killed four minutes after I had left—our first casualty, by a stray bullet through the head, unaimed, unintended, a dropping shot of the kind hardly ever fatal, a chance in a million, and foreseen with absolute clarity eight months before.

So began the tormented months of June and July, during which time, with much pain and grief, we learnt to be soldiers and to humour generals, as good soldiers should. We were still in our old rest-camp, dug with so much unnecessary enthusiasm on the first night of our arrival. We slept in little oblong dug-outs like coffins and the lucky ones had a water-proof sheet or two strung together to provide shade during the day. We lived and ate under an olive tree, silvery white with dust. I remember no rain, only the heat of the sun and the bitter cold of the June nights. And above all, the flies. Later on, the nights were perfect, made for talk or drink or love. We had to content ourselves with talk, and in consequence talked a good deal too much in self-protection. But the flies

remained, and remaining, increased. Hence A. P. H.'s outburst:

There once was a man who said "Why
Should I suffer the bites of this fly?
I'm prepared to concede
That it must have a feed,
But let it be Jerrold, not I."

Only very occasionally did we have a chance to drink. Some Greek wine would appear occasionally on the beach, and it was on great occasions preceded by an Achi-Baba cocktail—real navy rum and lime juice mixed. It neither killed nor cured, but it amused our guests. For the rest, our relaxation was bathing, when out of the line. We found a rather hazardous path down the cliff half-way between Sed-el-Bahr and, well, not exactly Constantinople but somewhere in that direction, and at the end of that path was a deserted strip of beach, where we could forget twenty thousand men, our own included, and lie in the shallow water and feel clean. We had a rock from which to dive and deep water for swimming. And the kindly Turk, who could see us clearly from Asia, only a mile or so away, never bothered us. Five young officers were, after all, hardly worth a shell.

Most people bathed in shoals off Lancashire Landing, or, more safely, off Gully Beach, where no one could interfere for it was on the far side of the Peninsula, remote from the Turks. It is probably there that we should have concentrated our main advance on both sides of the ravine towards Krithia, but the fatal evacuation of X beach removed this, the most brilliant of the possibilities. Gully Ravine was of great depth for a mile from the shore and its sides were steep. It would have provided in those days, when aeroplanes were not a menace, a perfect base, and from thence on the second day we must surely have reached Krithia and the slopes of Achi-Baba. As

it was, the frontal attack had become the order of the day and was so to continue at Cape Helles right up to the day of the Suvla landing in August, when the 42nd Division was ordered to attack on the left of our line and walked out to their death to show the Turks that they were still alive. None of them, I fancy, reached the enemy's front line. When we took over this part of the line, later in August, we could see, not fifty yards from our own trenches, two rows of dead, lying as they had fallen, a sombre tribute to the triumph of discipline over common sense.

We, too, had had an experience of that sort on June 19, when we were sent to capture a futile little trench only 700 yards from our own line. It cost us five officers and some seventy or eighty men killed, and when we got into it, it was found to be untenable, the ground in front being dead with no field of fire. To avoid further and useless loss, we gave it up, amid the protests of the staff, who had to report another significant failure of untrained troops. There were many such failures in 1915, and not only in Gallipoli, but the men who were untrained were unfortunately on the staff, as Sir Ian Hamilton was to learn in those fatal August days at Suvla. Still, the Staffs had achieved at Cape Helles what was known as "a miracle of organisation"; we were fed, of course, on the wrong food and nothing could resist the progressive march of disease; dysentery, enteric and typhoid (the last two politely termed enteritis and paratyphoid out of loyalty to the virtues of inoculation), which turned our battalions into mere handfuls of men. In September, my own battalion's strength in the line was, at one time, as low as 62 and behind us only one other battalion, no stronger. For all that, our plight was better than that of the new armies which had landed at Suvla. I was sick myself for nearly a month at Mudros and had seen some of the wrecks of the new Divisions which had failed so lamentably and buried finally the hopes of us all. They were not

untrained and, most certainly, not ungallant, but hopelessly led and broken in spirit. They were, in a sense, too well trained, trained not to reason why, and then thrown on to a desolate shore with no enemy to fight, under a burning sun, where their elderly colonels and brigadiers were expected to play the part of young, hardy and experienced frontiersmen. Instead, they had sat about waiting for orders and holding battalion and company parades. When the troops moved, their senior officers couldn't keep up, and if they did, they lost their way. I talked to scores of young officers, wounded, sick or merely sorry, and found them, like my own friends in the Naval Division, keen, sensible and willing, but one and all they had lived in a reasonable terror of elderly peppery colonels and popinjay adjutants, who, in their turn, were reduced to brainless automatons at the sight of a general. And now the young subalterns had realised that their kow-towing had been all for nothing. Their officers had not even known their own job.

To me it seemed, at first, so long as I was in hospital, incredible. Our own Battalion Commanders were mostly young and mostly active, and our Brigadiers were nothing if not paternal, especially my own particular Brigadier, General Mercer, later Adjutant-General of the Royal Marines, a man of gentle courtesy and chivalrous understanding. But when I escaped from hospital and went to one of the so-called rest camps on the island—camps formed to collect the debris from Suvla and commanded by dug-out Colonels of peculiar temper—I began to understand that elsewhere, things were different.

Two occasions I remember vividly. The first, a Sunday when all officers, there must have been seventy or eighty of us, were sent for by the officer commanding to listen to an address. "I am going to talk to you this morning," he began, "about a word with which you are unfamiliar. The word is Duty. In the Army, we are brought up differently from you;

we understand this word." I am sure the excellent Colonel had left a wife and family somewhere in lodgings at home and had wangled his way out, in the face of incredible obstacles, at an age when a trip to the Riviera would have taxed his strength to the utmost, and he was certainly, we could see, doing his duty as he saw it, talking as man to man with a crowd of his social inferiors, trying, oh so hard, to make them understand. Whether satisfied, or finally despairing, I never knew, but he never spoke to any of us again. We had, however, an inspection by one of the senior officers and I found myself, unfortunately, in charge of the parade, a miscellaneous gathering of about 1200 officers and men, none of them more than a week out of hospital. We were asked to parade at 10 a.m. and stood our ground (it was 120 in the sun) until one-thirty, by which time the brass-hat and his staff who had been on a tour of inspection, were seen about a quarter of a mile away. Then an A.D.C. arrived to say that the inspecting officer was going back to lunch but hoped to come again to-morrow. He did, but by that time I had laryngitis and tried to escape the responsibility of taking charge of the parade. Unfortunately I was not successful, but I did my best and tried to give the appropriate words of command when the great moment came. As I had anticipated, nobody could hear a word and the process of presenting arms was slow and disordered. The inspecting officer turned angrily to me and asked me when I had been promoted (I was by then Lieutenant R.N.V.R. and happened to be the senior captain in the camp). I told him and he turned to his Staff officer with the air of a Solomon. "Promoted on the field . . . I thought so . . . disgraceful." So saying, he strode away and completed his inspection, but he had still his duty to do, for before he went he came up to me and barked, "Learn to use your voice before I see you again."

Unfortunately I never saw him again, else I might have had as pleasantly an unintentional revenge as I had had in precisely

similar circumstances at the Crystal Palace, when I was learning to be an officer under Levey. There, too, I had had laryngitis and happened to be trying to drill the squad when the chief military instructor, Colonel Ramsden, bore down. "A disgraceful word of command," he roared, and ordered me back to the ranks. Two days later, however, I was again drilling the squad, this time with my normal voice, when he appeared. He watched me with visible amazement and when my time was up he called me over and told me that in forty years' experience he had never known an officer make so rapid an improvement.

I have long puzzled over these experiences but can find no rational explanation of them, but they were not, I realised, at all unique in the new armies. Feeling at Mudros was frankly mutinous, particularly among the Australians, to whose camp I was transferred almost immediately after the inspection. I greatly enjoyed this and found the Australian officers very friendly, on the ground that I belonged to the British Navy, which they admired, and not to the British Army, which, with the single exception of General Birdwood himself, they detested. The O.C. of the Australian camp was, like myself, in a semi-independent position, neither the Australian Corps nor the Naval Division being more than "attached" to the Army. He was a barrister in private life and was thus well qualified to take advantage of his anomalous position; he made a point of referring orders not concerned with military operations to his Government by cable. He refused to give me any orders at all, and as the only Naval Division officer on the island I gave myself orders to rejoin my unit. This was directly contrary to Army Orders, which allowed no officer to return to the Peninsula, but my solemnly-worded pass, typed out in my Australian friend's orderly room and signed by myself as O.C., R.N.D. Details got me through with a party of men who were equally anxious to return. As spoils of war I brought

with me three large cases of tinned fruit, on which we lived till the end of the campaign, and several tins of butter, which we had not seen since we left the *Ivernia*.

The miracle of Mudros was that amid all this tomfoolery a vast army was being watered and provisioned and (by the end of August) tolerably well supplied with ammunition and medical stores. At the beginning, before the popinjays descended, there had, of course, been a shortage of everything. Now there was plenty of everything and (on paper) a very considerable efficiency. For this, General Altham got the credit, and for all I knew (or know) he deserved it. Certainly some one did. But what was given with one hand was taken away from the luckless and chivalrous Sir Ian Hamilton with the other. Of young and efficient soldiers, with minds really trained in the art and science of war, I met on the Gallipoli peninsula or behind the lines, not one. And it only needed twenty-four to an infantry division to have turned those raw and gallant formations who lost the war at Suvla into fighting units second to none in the world. The officers must have existed; indeed, later on in France I met many such thrown away as Staff Captains, Brigade Majors or G.S.O.3's in those vast and futile post offices which encumbered the ground at intervals of a mile from Boulogne to Albert. The result? Well, it was quite simple and still quite unrealised. Not until the new armies had found their own leaders was the war to be won.

And now, as I write these ageing but still, to me, vivid reflections, I read that every one in the British Army had, to the end, complete confidence in their leaders—in Haig, and Gough, and Rawlinson? At all costs the truth must not, now that we are rearming, be allowed to be obscured by the rapidly-growing generosity of middle age. "Distrust a general who eats too much," says René Quinton. Distrust also the post-prandial tolerance of elderly ex-officers at Divisional dinners in the

year 1937. We do not want to fight those old battles over again. It is pleasanter, more gratifying to our middle-aged vanity, to fight only the enemy. After all, we won the war. Why recriminate? But if we ourselves are to fight again, as semi-senile dug-outs, and certainly to send another generation of young men to their death, let us do so with consciences still alert. We did not trust all our leaders. Some we liked; some we loved; almost all we respected; but the last thing in the world that we could ever do was to take their professional competence for granted. We had to learn to fight our own battles, and before we had learnt, the best of us were dead.

I returned to the Peninsula in October, 1915, to find the delusive comfort of routine triumphant. Everything was now being done in due sequence; forms had multiplied, courses of instruction were being arranged, there was no fighting and the Staffs had got busy. We even used to have conferences at Divisional Headquarters and I got to know, having been made Adjutant almost immediately on my return, something of the bones and sinews of an Army, the articulation of its movements. The British Army must surely be the best automatic machine in the world. It has few of the virtues, social or military, with which it is credited, but it has all the virtues which our romantic imagination prefers to deny to it. It has no talent for improvisation and its officers can do everything in the world except lead. They are brave to a fault, but that is another matter. To lead in battle you want the pioneering type or the enthusiast burning with logic, Francis of Assisi or Ignatius Loyola. Ignatius would never have got through Sandhurst; Francis, of course, would never have got in. But when it comes to making the best of a bad job, to defence or retreat or the even more difficult art of sitting still and doing nothing without getting demoralised, then the British Army is incomparable. This much of truth and reason is there in the old saying that we have never won a battle and never lost a

campaign. But alas, the answer to this complacent judgment lies written in the graves, the graves that are to be kept in such perfect order, on the Gallipoli peninsula—heroic dust settling on the ruins of an Empire. This was a campaign that could not be won without a battle.

The British Army had indeed been flung into a battle unique in the world's history; not a cold mechanical exercise in the laws of force, but a battle of men, of minds, a battle planned by the descendant of Marlborough, who, alas, had left no descendants. This was a campaign to be fought at sea by men of the calibre of Drake and Hawkins; on land by soldiers of fortune, or ruthless enthusiasts, a Montrose, a Cromwell, a Wolfe. We had our inspired moments, V Beach and Lancashire Landing. We prefer to forget them and to write rhapsodies on the genius displayed in running away. We sold the *River Clyde* to a tradesman and a government of tradesmen has since abandoned Lancashire Landing to Mustapha Kemal. Unfortunately, what we forget, the world understands.

Still, let me pay my tribute of gratitude. From September to December, 1915, we saved up our letters to write in the trenches. Peace reigned; health slowly returned, and spirits could be bought at 4s. 6d. a bottle. The Staffs had got busy. It was, as every one else has said, a "miracle of organisation." We are good at that sort of thing. When we surrender the last defences of our Empire, we may be certain that the protocols, like the graves, will be in perfect order.

We even had reinforcements in November and December, 1915, and the great blizzard killed off the last of the flies. The snow cleaned and sterilised the filth of war and I got a case of whisky from England. Stores poured in also from Alexandria, where sick officers, including Leslie Wilson, were recuperating, and we even moved to a new rest-camp, a purely lateral movement, but we were able to take our time about it and dig square and deep with six-foot communication trenches running

through the camp. The enemy were expected to be bringing up some heavy Austrian guns and as, at that time, we were there for the winter, we had to be prepared. But behind the scenes, things were happening. Kitchener came out and lunched on the *Aragon* at Mudros and all the drink was put away and people tried to look busy. It was a strange betrayal, for the drink had all along been refused to the junior officers from the front and was reserved for the Staffs. You would have thought that it took more courage to drink while refusing it to officers from the front than to drink in the presence of a Field-Marshal from London. But apparently not. Then Sir Ian Hamilton came out one day to visit our battalion sector and we took him to an observation post from which you could see the whole of our own and the Turkish lines stretching to the Aegean; ground which should have been ours on April 26. So long ago. Krithia was in the middle distance, not more than a mile away, a handful of white ruins gleaming in the sun. It was the first and last time that any of us had seen the Commander-in-Chief and not until his Gallipoli diary—the most poignant of all war books and the most certain of immortality—did we learn how often he had been on the Peninsula and how keenly he had suffered with and for us. He was the embodiment of a refreshingly old-fashioned courtesy, and I shall never forget his cavalier's face, so romantically regretful, as he looked out, I imagine for the last time, on the field of battle which had seen the ruin of his most ardent aspirations, which had seen brilliant strategy neutralised by tactics foolish to the verge of madness, and gallantry made futile by mere vulgar repetition. Given Sir Ian Hamilton's strategic imagination, a hundred able, active and intelligent officers of character could have taken the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to Constantinople. Men chosen for those qualities—initiative, enterprise, a certain ruthlessnes and an untiring physique—which were indispensable for the

campaign. None of them over forty. People say that Sir Ian Hamilton was no judge of men, yet he asked for Byng or Maude when he got Stopford. Not bad guesses, for neither Byng nor Maude were famous names when Sir Ian sent his telegrams in the summer of 1915.

With Sir Ian's departure, dusk and silence crept over the peninsula. It had become a graveyard. Sir Charles Monro was surprised at the positions occupied. He was less surprised than were we, far less surprised than our descendants will be, at the position he occupied himself. Our positions, he felt, had too many disadvantages. What more simple than to abandon them? Here was a chance to show what the Staff could do to repair the ravages of genius. The evacuation, the world has repeatedly been informed, was a very skilful operation. The phrase is just stupid. It does not require intelligence but merely the instinct of self-preservation to withdraw troops quietly by night instead of noisily by day, or to withdraw them gradually instead of all at once. Or to hold the front line to the last and so conceal your intentions from the enemy. There were no casualties because the Turks did not attack, but in no case would there, or could there, have been a major disaster. The German retreat to the Hindenburg line was a much more difficult operation and was wholly successful, because a few men and a few machine guns in organised positions can, in fact, delay an infantry army for twenty-four hours and can go on doing so, day after day. At Gallipoli the period of danger was nothing like twenty-four hours but in any case there was nothing that any one could do about it. If the Turks had chanced to launch a powerful attack on the last day, either at Suvla, Anzac or Cape Helles, no staff work could have prevented the loss of most of the few troops left behind there. But the risk, seeing that the Turks never attacked in force, was negligible. So, at least, it seemed to me, and to almost every one else whom I saw on the last day at Cape Helles, when the

risk, for what it was, was at its height, since the Turks by then must obviously have known of our intentions.

The French had been the first to leave, and the Naval Division took over their lines in mid-December, also their excellent rest camps, soundly built of corrugated iron and stone and much cleaner and more orderly than we had expected. Their dug-outs in the line were also far superior to anything we had imagined; they were the first deep dug-outs we had seen with splinter-proof roofs. We needed them, for on Christmas Eve the Turks put up the heaviest bombardment on our section that I had experienced and inflicted, despite the dug-outs, very severe casualties. The disadvantage of deep dug-outs is the extreme unpleasantness of leaving them. It is relatively easy to be conscientiously brave when you have no alternative, but excuses for remaining under cover where cover exists are damnably easy to find. Fortunately I was robbed of mine because the telephone to the front line from battalion headquarters was seventy yards away from our Headquarters mess, and it had to be answered. I know nothing more unpleasant than walking along a trench which is being shelled by howitzers. The bullet which kills you is inaudible, so they say, but the howitzer which kills you is unmistakable. You can hear it coming down for some seconds and you know whether it is going to be close or not, and no parapet or trench can save you, so you just wait or walk on, feeling extremely curious as to what is going to happen. One's curiosity, I found, is strangely mundane. Curiosity about the next world is rare. And yet perhaps the most interesting thing of all is that no one has any sense of grievance against the enemy for trying to kill him, as he tried so very hard, on that unpleasant Christmas Eve, to kill us. And after it is all over, one has much the same feeling of exhilaration as after a cold bath.

We had just been told that the Naval Division was to be relieved by one of the new army divisions from Suvla and

were naturally pleased, though we guessed that the relief was a camouflage, particularly as General Paris, who turned up the next day at one headquarters, remarked oracularly that the one reason for not evacuating Cape Helles that history could give would be that it was impossible.

Were we, was any one, conscious of the significance of the decision? We know now that certain of the naval and military chiefs were bitterly critical, but the sense of failure was too widespread and the lack of confidence in the general direction of the campaign too complete for any of us who had had the fighting to do to feel anything but profoundly relieved when our time came to go. When Sir Ian Hamilton decided to leave the Suvla landing to the new armies he had, in fact, burnt his boats. If they failed, it was psychologically impossible to launch a new attack from Cape Helles or Anzac without fresh troops, which he knew would not be given. You cannot ask the same troops to attack the same position month after month. If picked divisions from Anzac and Cape Helles had been moved to Suvla, the new armies could have attacked from Cape Helles later with at least a chance of success. In this event, even if Suvla had failed, and it would pretty certainly not have failed, the evacuation of the peninsula need not have taken place.

The reason given for employing the new armies at Suvla was that the troops at Anzac and Cape Helles were already exhausted in August. No doubt this was true; but here, and not in running away, was the real opportunity for intelligent staff work. A little reshuffling of brigades, a little relief, a little rest and no July battles, and a powerful Army Corps blended of experienced and raw troops and led by picked officers could have been assembled. As I had found from experience, three weeks in the clean air of Mudros were enough to cure most of the fashionable Gallipoli ailments.

As it was, we lived to fight another day. We left

undefeated by the enemy. Not a yard of ground taken was ever lost. We could certainly, despite the loose strictures of the high command on our lost fighting capacity, have held what we had won. But we were not required to do anything so old-fashioned. And so, at 11 p.m. or thereabouts on January 7, 1916, we turned our backs for the first time on the enemy and moved off to the beaches won at so much hazard, and to so little purpose.

It was a fine night, with a freshening breeze, which caused the Staffs, so we learnt afterwards, a great deal of anxiety. Our own anxiety was to avoid being killed at the last moment. I can imagine nothing more ridiculous than to be killed running away. And that was precisely what we were doing. No words, nothing in the world, will alter that fact which we tried so hard to conceal from ourselves and from every one else. We had, indeed, left behind, as a vicarious tribute to the integrity of our intentions, the bodies of our comrades. Other men, broken in battle, had gone before us, evangels of disaster. We had, as individuals, no alternative but to follow them, nor any desire to be martyrs for a derided faith, lost worshippers at an abandoned shrine, faithful fools in a world of sceptics. We were, on the other hand, infernally glad to be gone. But we had come away without our dreams, which were not, after all, merely illusions. Men had in the past dared all and conquered all. They have since. There are risks that great nations wishing to remain great must take. There are things which they cannot do, and remain great. A certain amount of arrogant folly is indispensable.

Two days before the evacuation we had to move up to replace a battalion of the London Regiment which was being embarked that evening. The main body of the battalion were to pass our advance party half-way to the line and I prophesied to William Ker that they would go by singing *Keep the Home Fires Burning*. They did. They had not read their Chesterton

as we had; we had no less than three copies of *Wine, Water and Song* in our Company mess, and we at least knew that there was

> Blood on the water and blood on the foam,
> And blood on the body when man goes home.
> And a voice valedictory:
> "Who is for Victory?
> Who is for Liberty? Who goes home?"

The voice valedictory was silent over Cape Helles on January 7, 1916. It is silent over most of Europe to-day. We are too busy continuing what was then begun, striving for a palm which can be won without dust and heat. We had certainly escaped the heat. It was very cool on the night of Jan. 7, 1916. It is cooler still to-day. Only a few churches being burnt and a few priests being murdered provide a fire to warm the hearts of the heirs of Gladstone; while on the shores of the Dardanelles, to cheer the hearts of the heirs of Disraeli, the Turkish engineers are busy and the Turkish guns are being mounted in the trenches that the Turks are digging. And as they dig they will turn up the bones of Englishmen, in that corner of a foreign field that was to be "for ever England." That was, for a few months, England. Only for a few months. And how long ago?

CHAPTER SIX

THE WAR OFFICE AT PLAY

IN GALLIPOLI we had seen the War Office gloomily at war. In France we were to see it at play. In Gallipoli it had played the rôle of patient ox, goaded near to madness by unauthorised outbreaks of civilian imagination and military genius. This last was much the more puzzling but, fortunately, susceptible of being dealt with by the "appropriate authorities." Sir Ian Hamilton, by March, 1916, was safely on half-pay. Sir Roger Keyes was in home waters, where any decently house-trained Admiral could have been trusted to keep quiet. For the rest, all was forgotten and forgiven. The 29th Division had gone to France; the 52nd Division had gone to Palestine. The Suvla divisions were at Salonica. The 42nd Division was in Mesopotamia. The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was in France, all save their splendid cavalry who were eyeless at Gaza; Allenby was still in France. Only the Naval Division remained to be disposed of. We had been garrisoning Imbros, Lemnos and Tenedos, with a brigade detached at Stavros on the extreme right of the Allied line on the Salonica front. There, but for political influence, we should have remained. What more fitting? The retreat from Antwerp, the flight from Gallipoli, then oblivion in some derelict outposts in the Eastern Mediterranean. So would the inheritors of Marlborough's England deal with the plaything of Marlborough's descendant. Yes, we might have been saved by kindness, but we were, thank God, saved by influence to be killed. It was more by cunning than by luck that we were saved, for the Admiralty, who always played the game fairly by their step-children, let the

War Office know that it intended, if we were not required for useful work, to recall us slowly but surely to service nearer the enemy. Garrisoning derelict islands was, the Admiralty felt, a job fit only for soldiers.

And so we went to France. Seldom can there have been such an inconsequential Odyssey as that of our particular party of officers, all on leave from the east, who set out from Waterloo one morning in May, 1916, to rejoin the Naval Division somewhere, sometime. No one knew where. Bernard Freyberg, senior officer in charge of the party, wisely drew much gold (in paper) from the Admiralty and we set off for Malta, to the horror of R.T.O's of all ages and sexes, in the Bombay Express, seen off by Lady Oxford, everything except the band playing.

Hans Breitmann gif a barty. Vere is dat barty now?

Of my friends, there were Vere Harmsworth and William Ker, the former escaped somehow from an appointment as A.D.C. to Smith Dorrien; Arthur Asquith, second-in-command of the Hood and Bernard Freyberg commanding it; F. S. Kelly who held the record for Diamonds and was one of the great pianists of his generation; E. W. Nelson, biologist to Scott's Antarctic Expedition and Stuart Jones, commanding the Anson Battalion. Colonel Ormsby Burge, commanding the Nelson and Major Lough, something on the Staff, were tritons among the minnows, for they were the only regular soldiers among us, and yet managed somehow to be junior to Freyberg. These I remember, but there must have been many more, for we were a party of twenty at least, and not a quarter of us alive to-day.

It was my only departure from London for the front and nothing less like Noel Coward's *Cavalcade* can be imagined. All the way to Malta we left military landing officers and transport officers speechless behind us. Officers travelling on the Bombay Express without iron rations represented a literally disgusting spectacle. I had had a foretaste of what the reaction might be when I had come to Paris on leave two months

before. I had lunched with my cousin, Lawrence Jerrold of the *Daily Telegraph*, then the *doyen* of the Paris Correspondents, but we dined at the Cafè de Paris, very improperly dressed, for we had no Sam Browne belts and very dubious tunics, at the next table to Prince Arthur of Connaught, Maurice Brett, and a number of no doubt equally distinguished Staff officers. Never have I seen more poigant anxiety on the face of any man that I saw on Maurice Brett's as he watched us. To begin with, no Sam Brownes. To go on with, rings on our sleeves (if we had had them through our noses the effect could not have been more startling). What were we doing in France? And, finally, and this was the crashing crescendo of the inquiry, what were we doing in a good restaurant? Temporary officers permanently drunk at the Folies Bergers were people whom staff officers could understand; but temporary officers, improperly dressed and belonging to no unit of the B.E.F., yet obviously sober and not even visibly frightened of the head waiter, here was something which clearly foreshadowed disaster. I read it all again in the eyes of one after another of the Staff officers at the table as they stared in turn at our unseemly costume. I longed for Clifford Codner, our transport officer, later immortalised by A.P.H. in the best of his war poems, *The Ballad of Codson's Beard*. If we had had that beard with us the popinjays must surely have squeaked. Bear baiting would have been poor sport by comparison.

I recalled a glorious moment on *H.M.T. Aragon* at Mudros Harbour when I had gone on board to get some money from the Naval Paymaster—and incidentally to get a drink —for naval officers were not subject to the army's embargo. On my way down to the saloon, a young first lieutenant, very much ornamented with red tabs and Piccadilly decorations, stopped me to inform me that officers from the front were not allowed to lunch on board. "By whose orders?" I asked him, and got a very dusty answer. I had an unfair advantage of him

because I happened to be wearing a tunic which bore only the three stars on the shoulder straps and no rings to show that I was a naval officer. Of course I got my drink in the end and at his expense: he knew, not being a regimental officer, when he was beaten.

On this Odyssey of ours we were on an equally good wicket, for not until the whole Division arrived in France did we come under the War Office and the Army Act. Even then, only for some purposes, as my friend Codner was to prove a year later, when they tried to make him shave off his beard and had to give him six months leave instead.

And so we pursued our quiet way in first-class sleepers to Marseilles, and by P. and O. to Malta and the hospitality of the Union Club. The opera season was in full swing and learning that, after all, we were bound for France and had to go back there, we felt like the Duke of Wellington and his officers before Waterloo and attended an incredibly bad performance of *Rigoletto* before moving off, in the appropriate company of Lena Ashwell's concert party,

> . . . Venafranos in agros
> Aut Lacedemonium Tarentum.

And yet they say that Horace was not a poet. It is we of this later century who have no poetry, as those who have visited Taranto know. At least there were no Spartan memories in 1916. Perhaps they have returned to-day, with the return of the Roman Empire. But in 1916 it was not the Italy of Mussolini, but of a discredited Garibaldi, symbolised, it would seem, by a shoddy Sam Browne over a threadbare red shirt. After an egregious muddle about permits and money we passed on to Rome—two and a half hours to make contact with eternity, without even the assistance of a Baedeker.

We saw St. Peter's, the Colosseum and the Forum, but not

the Sistine Chapel, which was closed, whether "for the duration" or by mere caprice, I forget. Rome then was the noisiest city in Italy and one of the most untidy. It was like a museum without a custodian; to find peace one had to lose oneself for a moment in the past. The Eternal City is, or at any rate was, a grotesque misnomer. What lived was not the past, classical, renaissance or baroque, but the present, and most particularly the trams and the touts. Compared with Oxford, Rome is a modern city; compared with Paris, it is not a city at all. Compared with London—but then London is the only eternal city, with the new and the useful not superimposed on the old, as in Paris, or jostling it into the back streets, but linked up with it, part of it, the one as much alive as the other, the centuries living together harmoniously, even if in sin. The only ancient monuments in London, now that the Crystal Palace is gone, are the Albert Hall and the Albert Memorial, put up to symbolise an imaginary culmination of an epoch of progress. They were put up just a hundred years too soon. England was not then ready to be frozen by the professors into a mechanical society of drones. Would that I could feel so confident that the visible memorials to the spirit of our own age, the vast sham-palaces of steel and concrete which house the political and economic planners of the age of unemployment, will become in their turns cenotaphs of dreams as dead as those buried in the ruins at Sydenham.

After Rome, Genoa, and after Genoa, Ventimiglia and a memorable night drive through a forest of fireflies in a vain attempt to get to Lord Rothermere's villa at Cap Martin. Thence to Marseilles where we feasted on little wild red strawberries drowned in Kirsch, before we returned once more to the Bombay Express and its wagon-lits; but where, alas, was the Madonna des Sleepings? As we steamed out to Paris, the infuriated Railway Transport Officer, who had ordered us to parade on Marseilles Station at eight o'clock in the morning with three days rations to board a troop train, stared at us in

impotent rage from the platform. If the British Admiralty could not unlock the gates of the Dardanelles it could at least force a passage through the Lines of Communication in France. Even in Paris our luck held, and we went on by the ordinary train to Abbeville before we fell into the clutches of the great machine, which had come into being to break the enemy line on the Somme and drive back the Germans out of France by sheer staff work.

We were the advance party of the Division, and our task, after sitting about for a fortnight waiting for orders, was to arrange billets for our respective battalions, and in due course, to meet their trains and guide them into place. Then came the first revelation of what had been going on while we were starving in Gallipoli. We had come to a land of plenty. From tip to toe we were re-equipped; new transport, new machine guns, new rifles, new uniforms, new generals. At Gallipoli we had made our own bombs out of jam tins; in France we were given whole cases of new and deadly bombs, not more than 10 per cent defective, to play with. But 10 per cent was enough, and we lost our excellent assistant-adjutant Hancock, one of the only two sailors in the battalion, on the second day of our training in France, through the infernal carelessness of some munitioneer, gallant on six pounds a week.

France was not the East—we were told proudly, and again and again. Everything had to be done properly or not at all. No hurried rush into the line, but a steady process of training behind the lines, with courses for officers and instructional visits to the trenches. Then, in due course, we might be allowed to hold a small piece of line of our own. But only if we were very, very good. Soldiers were ten-a-penny in France. This was a real war, with real Generals and real Staff officers. This meant that we lost Colonel Oliphant, our G.S.O. since 1914, a brilliant and erratic personality, best remembered for a famous comment at the Supreme War Council at Versailles,

when General Cadorna made his first appearance after the disaster at Caporetto. There was an expectant silence as the great men sat round the table waiting, not without a touch of complacent satisfaction, for the appearance of a soldier who had suffered a defeat more completely ignominious and unnecessary than any of them. Slowly the door opened and a vast and spherical shape loomed in the doorway. Before the greetings had begun, Oliphant's bland inquiry had been heard all round the table: "Is it a wine or a cheese?"

With us at Gallipoli Oliphant had had, at one time, a young and enthusiastic colleague as his G.S.O.2. It was in the grim days of June and July, when mere regimental officers felt that the conditions in the front line could, on the whole, have been better observed in the front line than two miles behind it, and some one, I think it was Leslie Wilson, suggested to Oliphant that he might care to come and see for himself. "Well, my dear Wilson," he replied, "you know that in this life brains and energy never go together. Look at myself and N —— (naming his youthful colleague)." It was not Oliphant who visited our headquarters next time we were in the line. Certain it is, no doubt, that as G.S.O.1 of a division in France Oliphant would have been unsuitable—a cynical, but still potentially active bull in what was no mere china shop but a whole emporium of extremely fragile, not to say sensitive, crockery.

We had lost too, our brilliant A.A.Q.M.G., Colonel Richardson, widely read in military history, whose services had been inappropriately requested by the New Zealand Government to look after their troops in London. Their successors on the Divisional Staff, and equally on the Brigade Staff, were charming but strictly according to sealed pattern, like our rifles, our equipment, our transport, our horses, and our generals, save only General Paris, whose high character and inflexible personality remained an intangible, if at times a negative asset.

For this was war according to the Field Service Regulations. From the sea shore to the front lines was one vast network of offices, linked up by an unending flow of paper, on which was recorded, reported and pigeon-holed every coming and going of the humblest private soldier; through which his every want was scrupulously attended to and his every deficiency, moral, intellectual or merely military, scrupulously, if irritably, made good. Almost every one in France over the rank of acting-Corporal was there to teach something to somebody else, or in process of being made fit by instruction to become an instructor.

We were saved from being totally immersed in the machine by a reputation, acquired from the very start, for a gloriously complete inefficiency. As Mr. Winston Churchill has remarked with perfect understanding and not a little sympathy, to military martinets we presented a "shocking spectacle." Could this discreditable legacy of the early days of the war—Ostend, Antwerp, Gallipoli, the days of strategy and bluff and stunts —could it not be buried? That was the first reaction, a very prolonged one, to our unspectacular appearance in France.

In Gallipoli the fighting had reduced us to two Brigades—six naval and two marine battalions. It was at first intended that we should supply ourselves with a new brigade, officered and supplied with drafts from our own depot, now moved from the Crystal Palace to Blandford. But this prospect was altogether too much for the authorities, so we were given an Army Brigade and an orthodox number. We became the 63rd Division, with a little R.N. in brackets as the only reminder to the Staffs of our unfortunate parentage. Alas, for the dreams of brass-hats. We might become a number to the War Office, but to harassed war correspondents desperately seeking for an island of individuality in a sea of numbers, we remained, until November 11, 1918, the Naval Division. So soon does history take its revenges, for it was as part and parcel of the Army that

we won our resounding successes, and in doing so, we only became better and better known as a separate and distinct organisation, set apart from the great military machine by the audacious but justified gesture of Mr. Winston Churchill.

A characteristic difference which struck me at once between Gallipoli and France was that in Gallipoli we saw with our own eyes and never from a place of complete safety all the fighting, and we always knew everything that was going on, but we saw none of the Generals, except our own. In France we saw all kinds of Generals, sometimes four or five a day, but never anything of the fighting, except when, after at process at once silly and rather disgusting, of "fattening-up," we were thrust into a battle to which, precisely like cattle, we had been brought in trucks. We were, in cricketing parlance, perpetually unsighted; no one outside Battalion Headquarters had a chance of knowing where they were or what they were doing. I doubt if 1 per cent of the troops knew to which Corps they belonged or what position it was defending. Certainly not 1 per cent cared. The Corps Commanders themselves became equally detached. They were administrative officers, not leaders of men in battle; so much so that one distinguished officer (later a Field-Marshal) actually allowed one of his Divisional Commanders to put in his Orders for a pending battle that "The Corps Commander himself is taking a personal interest in this operation." *Credat Judaeus.* Another almost equally distinguished officer, during the retreat of March, 1918, was so keen on preserving his office organisation that he left the battle-field for Albert and removed even the telephone from his headquarters lest he should be bothered with memoranda inquiring as to its disposal.

The fact was that in France officers and men alike ceased to be human beings, or even fighting animals (except on stated and peculiar occasions). They became, even when most exalted, units in a machine and only through the machine did even the

generals possess any *raison d'être*. British strategy was still under the ghastly delusion that heavy artillery could open the road to Berlin; that it was a war of material, not of men. Keep the machine well-oiled and greased, give it a trial run occasionally to see that it is neither over-oiled nor run down, and wait for orders. Meanwhile discipline was the solvent of all personal difficulties. Polish up your drill and learn to be killed quietly, without asking any awkward questions.

The Staff Officers who ran the machine were personally charming and, on the whole, efficient. Certainly we lacked nothing material. But there was a clear division of function; it was a staff war, not a regimental officer's war—the War Office at play, with more men, more guns and more money than they had ever dreamed of. Money to burn, literally. Thousands of pounds worth of ammunition would be blown off on quiet sectors as a demonstration, to the powers above, of the offensive spirit animating the local command. As to raids, I worked out, in a paper submitted by request to the War Office, in 1917, that the cost of the average raid was £150,000 with no counterbalancing gain except in the rare cases when an identification of the unit opposite was really required. The theory of the raid was that it kept up the offensive spirit of the infantry and prevented them becoming trench-bound. The theory was denied by the practice, for the company or platoon doing the raid was trained behind the line over an exact replica of the trenches to be raided, and what ought to have been a genuine, if futile, adventure became a drill, and because it was a drill the slightest departure from the programme, the tiniest touch of spontaneity, would be fatal. In short, the "raid" became an elaborate staff exercise, and the practice even grew up of the raiding party coming up to the line specially for the raid, while the line was held by some other battalion who knew little or nothing of the purpose of the operation.

Some of these raids were brilliantly successful, but they

were costly and wholly bad for the moral of the troops engaged, because they were apparently, if not actually, devoid of any military purpose which could justify the inevitable loss of life. The English soldier will fight to the last to defend a position, and will fight with less desperation but great gallantry in attack if the attack has some prospect of being successful, but like his French ally, and unlike the Australians and the Irish (in a cause which they consider their own) he does not fight for fighting's sake. The pioneering type is not bred in great cities, nor even on subsidised farms, and you cannot create the type by staff work.

As for officers, the adventurers, the scallywags, the black sheep, all these excellent people who, we are assured, are damned from here to eternity, went for the most part into the Flying Corps, where they could settle their account with God and man in their own way. Such people are dangerous as units in an administrative machine, and the machine gets, in any case, the very worst out of them. Two of our most unenthusiastic officers joined the Black and Tans in 1919 and lived, of their own free will, revolver in hand for months, making a deliberate rendezvous with death every day. In our battalion in France they were bored, irritated and inefficient. The only incident in which either of them figured in this war was when A. P. Herbert at Gavrelle sent one of them, then commanding a company, a signal for "one officer and 1 O.R." to report at Battalion headquarters. Very bored, B— read the order "one officer and 100" and marched his entire unit out of the front line in broad daylight in full view of the Germans. Luckily the German machine was as paper bound as ours, and no one fired a shot.

Our first Corps Commander (it was in May, 1916), was the famous Sir Henry Wilson, then in exile from power and influence and charged with the defence of Vimy Ridge and the task of extending our hold on its crest—two tasks in which he had signally failed just before we had appeared on the scene.

Already, Henry Wilson was co-operating actively with Lloyd George and urging that steps should be taken to get rid of the Prime Minister. At the very same time, he sent a long memorandum to all Battalion commanders including my own, to whom, as a potential sympathiser, he had told the full story of his political activities, bitterly complaining of comments by regimental officers on their superior commanders, and reminding them of the immense gulf that existed between the brains of the general and those of the junior officer, which rendered any criticism of the former by the latter a grotesque absurdity. Henry Wilson was a curious mixture of the political soldier and the sealed-pattern regular officer. Professing a deep disgust at the mere sight of civilians, he was never happy except in their company. Professing himself a stern disciplinarian, he criticised every superior officer in France to every one he met. Posing as the professional soldier *par excellence*, his writings showed him almost totally devoid of any understanding of the science of modern war; and posing as a general "mixer" and "bonhomme" he was totally incapable of understanding ordinary civilians (other than politicians). He had an extensive repertory of extremely *risqué* stories and a Rabelaisian vocabulary, and if you did not listen admiringly he had no use for you. His world was packed with politicians to be used, professional soldiers to be pushed aside (upwards or downwards made no matter), and scallywags, for cannon fodder in the line and for an admiring audience behind it. But he had personality. I can see him now, as I first saw him, one June morning when he rode over to look at our battalion somewhere behind Vimy, the quintessential *faux bonhomme*, every feature embodying a contradiction; red-faced, but thin; an evident *viveur* but with an eye as keen as a hawk's; hair grey; face weather-beaten yet preserving somehow the air of a young man who had just finished a good lunch and was going back to an even better

dinner; an over-elaborate *farceur* whose face would suddenly reveal a Mephistophelean cunning. Finding Leslie Wilson no coward to be bullied, and recognising a fellow-politician, he expressed himself very pleased with all our rather amateurish manœuvres and asked him to dinner.

The "line" in France was a revelation to us poor amateurs from the East; dirty, unplanned, badly wired, with trenches shallow and badly-sited, it really frightened us until we realised that the vast military machines on both sides stopped dead two miles behind their respective fronts. At Gallipoli we held our trenches; there was nothing else to hold. There were no reserves and no room for manœuvre. Neither side could afford to allow the other elbow room. When we were taken to the famous Lorette Spur, which was held by a company of the battalion in reserve, there were also no reserves, but there was also no enemy, and one could buy a drink in an estaminet within the front line system, while over at Coupigny, less than two miles back, not a pane of glass had been broken or ever was broken during the whole course of the war.

All the fighting was done on maps neatly arranged on chateaux walls miles away, and as the maps proved quite clearly to the Germans that as long as we held the Lorette Spur no advance was possible across the wide stretch of flat land which it commanded and as the same maps told our own headquarters that while the enemy held the crest of Vimy Ridge no advance was possible over the wide stretch of flat ground which *it* commanded, and as the capture of either of these positions was obviously a major operation, there was nothing to be done. How much of the story was true on the German side I cannot say. They certainly held Vimy, and as we were disputing it with them, we knew that they held it in force. All the same it is not certain that a surprise attack across the flat ground to the north as far as Lens would have met with disaster. On our side

this Lorette spur was, in fact, undefended,[1] and between our front line system and the coast there was not, in midsummer 1916, a man or gun. Even the battalion "resting" (for we did one week in and one week out of the line), was not in any defensive position. Our time was divided between Noulette Wood, within a mile of the first line, where we lived in huts as safely as at Blandford, and Ablain St. Nazaire where there was the remains of a village destroyed in the fighting for the Lorette spur. Here also we were undisturbed and could even bathe in a pleasant stream, having anticipated modern fashion and built ourselves a bathing pool. We were, you see, becoming sensible. We had begun to realise that the war had nothing to do with us. If the Germans chose to kill us they could, but as long as they didn't and as long as the Canteen went on supplying whisky and the Paymaster paper francs, we could live. I did indeed suggest that as the trenches were obviously untenable and as there were no reserves we should fill up the first line system with barbed wire and construct machine gun redoubts at strategic points—thus providing a fairly deep defensive zone which could be a death-trap to any one who walked into it. We could then withdraw nine-tenths of our men to safe positions behind the lines and regain some freedom of manœuvre in case of attack; but the suggestion was regarded by every one except Leslie Wilson as merely impertinent. It was, in almost every detail, the official system of defence adopted after the disaster of March, 1918. Had it been adopted before, and the suggestion, I imagine, must have been made by half the infantry adjutants in France, that disaster would never have occurred. As it was, the effect on the fighting spirit of this sham warfare in derelict and lousy trenches was execrable, because the whole affair was so manifestly unintelligent. The deep-dug-out-habit spread, and the verminous and bedraggled

[1] It provided "billets" for a company resting after a week in the trenches, the "billets" consisting of dirty dug-outs looking out on decayed and flooded trenches. They all faced the wrong way and could have been blown to pieces in a minute.

garrison was only seen in its full array at the routine "stand at arms" at dawn, when the rifles that were never fired were elaborately inspected and every one wore tin hats except myself, who had been lucky enough to find a papier-mâché helmet which satisfied the requirements of routine. The only casualties occurred when the trench-mortar experts decided to have a little target practice. This was hotly resented because owing to the limited range of their guns they had to fire from our reserve trenches. After firing they retired into a dug-out, while the Germans "retaliated" on us, and honour demanded that a subaltern, a sergeant and a half a dozen men should stand up and pretend to enjoy it. If the retaliation went on long enough the company commander had to appear, and if the worst came to the worst some one from battalion headquarters had to express the requisite curiosity by getting shot at himself. It was certainly not magnificent, but was it war? We felt more than a little doubtful.

All through July and August we could hear through the still summer nights the thunder of the guns on the Somme, and in the daytime we read in the papers the lengthening casualty lists and the sorry story of futile and disastrous battles. And then began the deluge of paper "Lessons from the Somme Fighting." The lesson was obvious, but it was not contained in any of the documents put before us. Everything, it seemed, had gone all right, but the infantry had let the staff down. "Mopping-up" was the key to Berlin. There had not, it seemed, been nearly enough of it. What had unfortunately escaped notice was that the need for "mopping-up" spelt nothing less than the total failure of the whole tactical scheme on which the hopes of half the world had been centred; on the preparation for which our vast industrial resources had at last been efficiently directed, and to which the whole of our available trained man-power had been recklessly sacrificed. The idea had been that, given sufficient artillery preparation and the new device of the

barrage, the German trench system could be advantageously captured by frontal infantry attack. This idea was now shown to be worthless. The German trenches could, of course, be entered, but the assaulting infantry had found them virtually undamaged by our own fire and the enemy themselves still safe and resolute in their underground defence system. "Mopping-up" was simply staff camouflage for the desperate hand-to-hand fighting necessary to secure a permanent foothold in these defences. It was, none the less, a cruel camouflage, because it implied that after the staff and the politicians had done nine-tenths of the work for us, we had egregiously let them down by failing to put the tiny finishing touch to their stupendous achievement. It was also technically idiotic to the point of criminality. For what remained to be "mopped-up" were not a few desperate individuals with a handful of bombs, but elaborate redoubts armed with machine guns, so sited that they commanded every part of their own trench system, and so constructed as to be in effect immune from infantry attack. There were, in fact, only three ways of dealing with this system of defence, and "mopping-up" was not one of them.[1]

It was certainly difficult for any one who heard the thunder of the guns forty miles away as we did for weeks in front of Lens, and still more difficult for us as we watched the bombardment in October and November on the Ancre, to imagine that any trench system could stand up against this continual artillery assault. But it could and did. Even the advantage of the barrage, which kept the defenders out of sight and the guns out of action during the actual period of the advance across No Man's land was neutralised or worse by the warning it gave the enemy, who put down a counter barrage of high explosives and

[1] The methods were (1) an attack by tanks; (2) a successful advance by the infantry on both flanks to a sufficient depth to isolate the garrison, or (3) a break through at one point sufficiently complete to enable fresh troops to attack the entire trench system from a flank—the tactics employed at the Drocourt-Quéant line in the decisive battles of September, 1918.

machine guns which often caused as many losses to the attackers as if there had been no barrage at all.

And this is the astonishing, because it is the historical, fact. Already, in August, 1916, we knew all this, and yet we wanted, in the security of Noulette Wood, to be in the battle. I have often wondered why. In what mood of fatalism, or chivalry or vanity? A little of all three, I suppose. Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, we got our orders to leave the next morning for the training area, twenty miles or so, if I remember rightly, behind the line. We had just got a grand piano for a concert arranged for the next evening and with immense toil and trouble had got it installed in one of the huts. Still, that was a small affair. What mattered was that, after the best part of three months in the line, we were going back to baths and billets and clean sheets and estaminets. Then, inevitably, a battle of some kind, but rumour said Vimy, not the Somme. It was all the same to us. Something, however, always happened to the Hawke Battalion's battles. Even our one raid had been washed out by these orders and perhaps the real explanation of our readiness to leave the quietest sector of the whole British line was that we felt somehow that our luck would still hold. There were, of course, officers by the score who went through the whole war without a really dangerous battle. Was it, we wondered, possible for a battalion to do the same.

Oddly enough, for a very long time it seemed as if our luck was going to hold. Our search for a battle was prolonged, if not ardent, and some of our happiest days—some indeed of the pleasantest of my life—were passed in the process. I forget altogether where we went, and on asking A. P. H. if he remembered any better, he confessed that he did not. Those names which seemed so indelibly engraved on our memories have faded, and the villages where we drank deeply, if cheaply, and played so much poker and made so much noise that on one occasion we even woke up the Divisional Staff, have

relapsed now into their natural peace, and I doubt if they see in a year as much champagne as we used to drink in an evening, and then survive to parade at 7 o'clock, I on a large black horse and every one else on foot. How I envied them! Then, at the more discreet hour of nine or nine-fifteen we would have a Commanding Officer's parade, complete with band and all the ceremonial we could concoct from the combined memories of our battalion headquarters, assisted by the colour-sergeant of marines who was acting as our regimental sergeant-major. We were, for the first time since we left Blandford, something that looked like a battalion, and what from an adjutant's point of view was more important, something that, on parade, *felt* like a battalion. Of course, only on our good days. There were too many amateurs, myself the most amateurish, for things to go right too often for the excitement to wear off. I still remember one brilliant morning of sunshine, the band playing the companies on to what happened to be a superb natural parade ground, when I sensed that something, the air and the sunshine perhaps, or that exhilarating feeling of collective insecurity which is the salt of life to ardent and decent youth, had heightened the tempo. The companies, even the worst of them, came on to the parade ground with an air; and when I took over the parade, waiting till Leslie Wilson arrived, I knew that the drill would be, for once in a lifetime, as good as anything you could see at Chelsea Barracks. And after four minutes, it was, and while the spell was still on us, Wilson arrived and drilled us for ten minutes of what we all knew was mere magic. "No battalion could ever move better than that," he said to me, quite shocked at the sight, "What's happened to them?" I didn't know, and I still don't, but I used an authentic and memorable experience (and hope that I recaptured a little of the fugitive glamour) when, in my novel, *Storm over Europe*, I described the rebel levies in the last parade before the battle, bayonets glistening in the sun, a thousand lives attuned

as by a miracle to the urgent moment. Mere romanticism? Perhaps, but as Conrad reminded us, you can drink the waters of romance in many latitudes, "but the flavour is with you." If we lose our palate, or corrupt it with mere vulgar cynicism, it will go hardly with us, for we cannot live for ever in "the shadow of what once was great"; we must recapture the reality or die.

At last after much inspection and a lot of organised and unorganised merrymaking, the former insufferably tiresome—comic songs, double ententes and *Gunga Din*—we entrained for the Somme. We had to go twenty miles and it took eight hours; our transport, which went by road, arrived long before we did, and when we arrived we had lost half our iron rations because our men had started throwing them to a party of German prisoners who were working by the side of the line where the train had stopped for an hour or so. Even Leslie Wilson's equanimity was a trifle disturbed, for what satisfactory explanation could possibly be given for the disappearance of four hundred iron rations issued only the day before? Happily, no explanation was ever necessary, as our excellent quartermaster had a concealed reserve from which the deficiency could be made good, so the Germans, the Staff and the men were all happy. What more could infantry officers desire?

The Lens area was a natural battleground *manqué* The Somme area was a God-forsaken battleground created by earnest Staff officers now (it was almost October) slightly hysterical about their still incomplete labours. An atmosphere of over-elaborated brusque inefficiency pervaded the hinterland of the slaughter. Too many men, too many officers, far too many generals, and a thousand times too many jacks-in-office, R.T.O's, Town Majors, A.P.M's, Traffic Control Officers, Laundry Officers, Liaison Officers, Railway Experts and endless seas of mud. And no more estaminets. This was war; all civilians had been evacuated months ago, even from

behind that part of the line where we were still in our original trenches.

And then, after all, began one of those games of hide-and-seek with death of which we had so many. For with our arrival, the summer ended and the rain began; dust turned to mud and mud to flood, and plan followed plan in bewildering succession.

> "And those behind cried 'Forward,'
> And those in front cried 'Back.'"

In obedience to those alternating calls we moved up and down and left and right every other day. We arrived fat and strong, equipped for the slaughter. In eight weeks we had lost half our men from mere weariness of coming and going, exasperatingly futile and dangerous working parties, and the general malaise which followed on the wounding of General Paris, and the arrival in his place of the enigmatic and explosive Cameron Shute, who signalised his arrival by the announcement that he had visited our lines and had found excreta in every corner of the trenches. The trenches which we had just taken over were certainly the filthiest, the worst sited, the worst dug and the worst-maintained that we or any one else had ever seen, but the fact was, on the whole, more to the discredit of the Army which had been there for months in continuous occupation of them than of the Naval Division which had only been in them a few hours.

I had two examples, in the first week of General Shute's command, of his curious habits. On the first occasion, I was standing in a communication trench talking to George Peckham about everything in the world except the war, when we were surprised by the General's arrival. Foolishly, we were standing in a blind corner and there was no avenue of escape. A rain of questions descended, which we were fortunately able to answer,

and all seemed to be going well. Alas, the General had a habit when standing still of striking the ground rather forcibly with the point of his walking stick. Our trenches were innocent of duck-boards and more than ankle-deep in mud. The General's stick went in deeper and deeper, till suddenly it struck something hard. Instantly there was an ominous bristling. After much kicking and scraping a perfectly good box of S.A. ammunition was revealed. "Ammunition boxes lining the communication trenches," the General exclaimed, drafting out loud another report to Corps Headquarters on the iniquities of the Navy. "Good God, sir," cried George Peckham, with a credible imitation of pietistic but tolerant horror, "I believe you're right." This was not at all what was expected. George Peckham's replies to senior officers seldom were. He was the perfect Edwardian, of the stamp and period of Frank Otter. Once at some instructional conference at Divisional Headquarters when we had to give our name, rank and unit to some Staff officer, he had shocked even our own case-hardened Staff by replying in stentorian tones, "George Peckham of London." Now he stood looking at the General, who was by then quite white with rage, as if he were a lunatic to be humoured and then, on some pretext or other, shown off the premises. "And you were deliberately standing there trying to conceal it from me. It's a damned disgrace."

"Good God, sir," says George with a broad smile, "if I'd known you were coming, this is the last place on earth where I should have been standing." However the General was not so easily defeated. "Then you knew about it all the time. Don't argue with me any more . . . scandalous, disgusting . . . disgraceful." With that he turned on his heel while we proceeded to investigate the rest of the trench, more, I fear, out of curiosity than zeal. Oddly enough Shute's wild guess had been right. The trench was, quite literally, paved with ammunition boxes, obviously by an army working party who had

chosen this way of getting rid of them while nobody was looking.

My next encounter with General Shute was shorter and even less sweet, for he was riding through the village where we were billeted two days later when he saw a solitary sentry presenting arms. Then he caught sight of me. "Why the hell doesn't the guard turn out?" he shouted. "The guard room is two streets away," I replied, knowing I was on a good wicket. I fancy the General thought so too, for he simply roared, "Don't lie to me!" and rode off.

Incidents like this are ludicrous enough in retrospect, but they were a real menace to efficiency at the time. Once an officer gets into that state where he asks not "What ought I to do," but "What will the General say?" he has ceased to function as a useful member of an army in the field. Our own brigadier was a case in point. Till Shute came he had been charming, efficient and courageously independent. After Shute arrived he just dithered and spoke in faltering prose the abuse which he felt that his superior officer would otherwise deliver in the finest poetry of invective. And the men, who after all have to do the fighting with all this going on, lose confidence either in their officers or in their generals, or more probably in both.

Assuming battles can be won by officers who can't or won't think and have had all the initiative drilled or bullied out of them, this might be a good thing. But no battle can be so won. The enemy may lose them, sometimes, but if we are going to trust to that, the opposing generals had better toss up. It would save time, trouble and expense.

My third encounter with Shute was when, with our battle at last reasonably imminent, he came to inspect us. He wished us luck and told us that no prisoners were required. I am afraid we were not amused but my own enjoyment of the situation was in any case spoilt by the fact that I had forgotten to have the pioneers on parade. I shall never forget them in the next

war, because, à propos of my crime, some one, Leslie Wilson, I think, told me the story of the Duke of Cambridge who, after inspecting a battalion, returned to the front of the parade and asked the commanding officer where his pioneers were. "On the left of the battalion, two paces from the rear rank of No. 8 Company" (or whatever the Drill Book of the day prescribed) replied the colonel proudly, for he had not forgotten to have them on parade. "Very good," said the Duke, "get them out here in front and tell them to dig a very large hole and bury your bloody battalion."

I had no excuse for forgetting our pioneers, but I had an excellent reason. When I was putting out the markers my horse took fright and bolted off the parade ground and twice round the village, and I only got the animal back under control just before the inspection was timed to take place. My shame in telling this sad story is lessened by learning only the other day from A. P. H. that after I was wounded my "charger" had to be turned into a pack horse because no one could ride him.

After Shute, Sir Douglas Haig. This, of course, was our death warrant; only those about to die salute the Commander-in-Chief. Still, there was a friendly, almost homely air about that inspection that I like to remember, especially after being privileged to read, by the kindness of Lady Haig, her husband's letters from the front, of which only a fragment, and unrepresentative at that, have been reproduced in the official Life.

I cannot alas, tell here even one of the many delightful and amusing stories which are to be found in those letters, or of the comments (surprisingly original and very frank) which the author passed on many of the famous figures of the time. It is, however, no breach of confidence to say that, however much or little these letters will affect the historian's judgment of the strategy and tactics employed during the period of Lord Haig's command, they give a wholly delightful picture of the man

who remained to the great majority, and unfortunately still remains, pre-eminently the Unknown Soldier.

With the exception of Lord Oxford and Lord Haldane, Haig had no great respect for politicians and no interest in political groups. Henry Wilson's face had lighted up when he recognised in Leslie Wilson a fellow-politician, but Sir Douglas Haig's greeting was merely courteous. Suddenly, however, he caught sight of our second-in-command, Major Ducane Norris. His face lit up. "Haven't I met you hunting in Warwickshire," he asked, delighted. "What are you doing here? You ought to be a General."

We did not, for some reason, parade as a battalion, but by companies, which were drawn up close to their billets. This was a pleasant change and if due, as I imagine, to the Commander-in-Chief, it was a stroke of genius, for it created an atmosphere of intimacy and good humour. Inspections usually produce exactly the opposite effect to that intended, because they mean days of preparation, extra duties, and finally lead up to hours of waiting about on parade with half a dozen inaudible platitudes as the only reward. Sir Douglas Haig made no speeches, but he talked to all the officers and to most of the N.C.O's, and forbore from all comment when George Peckham, who had been summoned at the eleventh hour from the estaminet, burst through a hedge to find the inspection of his company actually in progress. George proceeded to explain, after being introduced, that he was a Marine, the implication presumably being that he had only just returned from a long sea voyage and that nothing but wind and tide would have made him late!

Although this inspection should have been the immediate prelude to battle, autumn decided suddenly to become winter, and the Staffs, for the sixth time, changed their minds.

The position on the Somme was simple and utterly unsatisfactory, largely, if not wholly, because Joffre's advice,

offered on July 2, to capture Thiépval before proceeding with the battle, had not been taken. Till Thiépval fell, the positions in front of Serre, Beaumont Hamél and Beaucourt could not be carried. Moreover, about two miles beyond Thiépval is a ridge intersected by the Ancre valley which uncovers the whole of the German positions north of the Ancre and makes them, in fact, untenable. Instead of concentrating on this line of advance, we had persisted in exploiting the success we had gained further south. In this way we inevitably concentrated the enemy's resistance, and found the front of our successive advances growing narrower, till in the end we created, for all our 400,000 casualties, little more than an awkward salient. We had, as usual, been hypnotised by the strategy of the "break through" which is not in fact a strategical conception at all, but an optical illusion which comes to those who gaze too long at maps through rose-tinted spectacles. Lines do not in practice, break; they bend. Only if in the process of bending they uncover some position of strategic importance, political, geographical or material, a capital city, a hill or a bridge-head, an arsenal or a railway—will the "break through" strategy appear to work. But even then there will in fact have been no "break through," but the capture of some military objective which causes a retreat without the need for "breaking through." Of course, if there are no reserves, or if the enemy runs, or if the higher command loses its head, victory may descend from heaven on any general, but none of these things happened, or was likely to happen, in 1916. Failing that, and failing the possibility of surprise, which is the only motivator of these penetrations, troops in the field cannot make the Knight's move, moving fully equipped over an obstacle and emerging fresh and ready for action on the other side. The flags on the Staff maps can and do move that way. The reality is grimly different. A handful of tired, shocked and hungry men lying about in shell-

holes just where the flag is stuck so gaily on the map, and behind them a square mile and a half of impassable trenches littered with the dead and the dying and a few of the enemy here and there letting off an occasional shot, while the generals two miles away are wondering what is happening. The enemy shell the whole area indiscriminately and put down a machine-gun barrage by night to prevent reinforcements coming up. Nevertheless a few do come up, and by night they begin to dig, and when day dawns there is the outline of a trench but still not much food, for ration parties cannot get across the captured ground and every man who can must carry ammunition, water and bombs against the expected counter-attack which, according to the rules of both armies, must be made within twenty-four hours. And sure enough, it is, and while the little flag is still gay on the Army Commander's wall, the counter-attack comes, but from men equally tired and so it is beaten off, though not without losses. For the trench is still shallow, there are no deep dug-outs and no creature comforts, and the reinforcements don't know where they are or what they are doing and are more of a nuisance than anything else. And there is no one really in command, and no one knows where the line begins or ends, and the enemy will get in here and there so that our new line will be bent before it has been finished.

And when it is finished the Staff will turn up and say how inadequately it has been constructed. But oddly enough, they will not refer to the "break through" but only to the great new frontal attack on the enemy's new trench system which has taken shape stage by stage with ours and is now, like ours, fit for generals to walk in.

That is a successful battle of the 1916 pattern. A very successful one indeed, and a very swift one, very quickly known and finished. Often enough the brave and gallant were undiscovered for twenty-four hours or more, or some-

times, as at Trônes Wood, for more than two days. And some of them are to this day unknown, and no little flag has ever fluttered on a wall to celebrate their agonies.

And while this story was being told, while "the long and sombre procession of cruelty and suffering," as Mr. Asquith described it in a moving speech made shortly after the death of Raymond Asquith in one of the early July battles, was in progress, the key which must, as events showed, have made so much of it unnecessary, had been neglected till October. Now, seeking for the culmination to the year's campaigning, it was enjoying the attention of the Staffs. With Thiépval at last in our hands, could we not press on and reach the ridge north of the Ancre behind Beaucourt and take the whole German position from Beaucourt to Serre in reverse? The answer, for once, was satisfactory. We could and we did. *Quorum pars minima fui.*

All through October and November we were in and out of the trenches immediately to the north of the Ancre, which at this point ran exactly at right angles to our line, roughly east and west, while our line ran roughly north and south. Where our lines ran down to the Ancre valley were the ruins of the village of Hamel, and just behind our lines, separated from them by a steep ridge, was the larger village of Mesnil, where one of our battalions was usually in reserve.

All the country here was "pockety" except where the ridge ran down to the swamps, and the front-line trench system was itself a switchback, with the support line on a steep ridge and a deep valley immediately behind the front line, which was on the reverse slope of another ridge. In addition to being filthy, the trenches had been planned by fools and were repeatedly blown to pieces by a watchful enemy. There were no deep dug-outs and the communication trenches had been dug slap across the face of the ridge and were under constant fire. In the firing and support lines men could only stand and freeze

in the mud; there was no room to talk or to lie down, and digging, in the face of the enemy, was nearly impossible. When battalions were out of the line their lot was no better a preparation for the attack, for they would go back no further than Mesnil or Engelbelmer, from whence they would go up nightly to the trenches, engaged in the most exhausting working parties. To get round a battalion front at this time was a three hours' walk, with mud often above the knees. Yet in these trenches half the battalions detailed for the intended assault had to live, while the other half had to carry up them and across them stores and ammunition for the innumerable dumps which would feed the advancing line of battle. The constant issue and re-issue of battle equipment and stores added to the confusion. These stores had to be counted in and counted out, carried up and carried down, till men would have volunteered, almost, to go out unarmed, if they could be spared the perpetual juggling with bombs and sandbags, and flares and wire-cutters and compasses, which seemed to be the only permissible alternative.

The last, but not the least, of the hardships of these days was the digging of assembly trenches on the slopes leading down to the valley of the Ancre. Here the front-line trench went back sharply, and General Shute decided that, if the battalion in this flank were not to lose direction, they must be formed up in alignment with the rest of the Division. Therefore, trenches must be dug.

This was, to me, the last straw, because it meant that when we were in the line, I was responsible for guiding innumerable parties of strange men to the front line and beyond it to share in the digging and for getting them back again safely before daybreak, and when we were out of it, for supplying working parties from men already exhausted and supposed to be resting. The physical strain imposed on the men was far too great, largely owing to the condition of the ground and the craze for

firing, from some position close to the front line, endless quantities of a peculiar kind of shell fired from trench mortars which I only remember as "toffee apples." One of these things was a strong man's load, and it took a man of quite exceptional physique to carry one from the dump up the steep slopes of the communication trenches six inches deep in sticky mud to the Trench Mortar Battery position just behind the front line. The "toffee apples" were large enough and heavy enough in all conscience, but for all their size and weight they seldom fulfilled their purpose, which was to destroy the deep dug-outs and fortified machine-gun strong points on which the German defence system depended. They made a great deal of noise and dust, but their sound and fury signified no more than the sound and fury of the fourteen-inch shells which the Monitors used to fire, alternately into the Turkish trenches and our own, at Gallipoli. The heavy Trench Mortars were equally promiscuous in their habits, a fact which did not add to the pleasure of the working-parties of infantry who had to carry up their ammunition. It was indeed only when I ran into a party carrying these infernal machines that I ever heard the British soldier deliberately and filthily blasphemous—a well-known danger-signal incidentally, for ordinary "language" means nothing.

Still, things were moving. We had our orders several times issued and withdrawn; we had even, on November 6, been finally withdrawn and had got in touch once more with civilisation in the shape of a soda-water factory at Doullens, where I sent a limbered-wagon which returned with twenty-four dozen bottles intended to last us for a night or two of much-needed drinking. Unfortunately the sight of our transport loaded with soda-water bottles was too much for neighbouring units, including the brigade staffs, and my telephone rang all the afternoon with requests for supplies. Perhaps because the supplies were non-intoxicant my energy

and initiative was more popular than it had been when I sent from the front line, by a priority signal, for whisky, and getting no reply to my second urgent message, complained to the Brigade of the deficiencies of their Signal office. My second signal, "Please expedite reply to my D.J.109," had, it turned out, reached the Brigade Major instead of the Quartermaster. Luckily it was in the pre-Shute era, and the shock to the nerves of the Staff was not mortal.

We certainly needed a good party after four weeks in the Hamel sector, and no one needed it more than I did, for the deluge of paper had increased proportionately with the deluge of shells. It took me, and I write fast and am a good liar, from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. to compile or edit all the different situation, gas, weather and intelligence reports required daily in the intervals of transacting the necessary business of the battalion. By breakfast time the telephone started, and that daily deluge of signals began which culminated for me so gloriously half an hour before zero on the morning of the battle itself with a request for a "nominal roll of all the officers and men in your unit who can speak Chinese."

That was an easy one, of course, but the more usual form of torture was a request to nominate men for courses of instruction in some utterly futile subject. This involved writing to the companies for the names of the most sick or otherwise useless men on their strength and guessing, by the warmth of the recommendations, which of the men concerned would be the best riddance. When we moved down to the Somme, all our detached men returned to us, a kind of aortic regurgitation which was by no means always conducive to discipline. But our battle had been postponed for so long that somehow by November we had got back on to the list of Divisions who could be drawn on to keep the instructors and the Staffs occupied. We had also begun to lose men from sickness at an alarming rate, sickness amounting to nausea for a

day or two after listening to the inevitable lecture about the bayonet by the famous Colonel C—— I'm surprised to see that Siegfried Sassoon found that this horrible and very theatrical performance had a good effect on the moral of his men. Our men, at least the best of them, were Tyneside miners and had been born and bred in the presence of danger, and they were just as ready to risk their lives in an attack as they would have been with a rescue party after a pit explosion. It was their job, and they strongly resented being asked to feel full of hatred of their enemies, and were frankly disgusted, and said so, at being asked to take pleasure in the work of killing.

The effect of the gallant Colonel's eloquence on the officers was just as disastrous, but redeemed by a sense of humour. "Do I really feel sick?" Ker asked me as the Colonel at last reached his peroration, "or do I merely know that I ought to feel sick?"

But the weather was the worst villain of the piece. The rain turned into snow and then into frozen mud and mist. It was only on November 9 that the sun shone for one fitful morning, and all the Staffs from all the headquarters in echelon, stretching back to St. Omer, came out to inspect the wicket and decided that it would be fit for play in four days' time. We were only a mile behind the line at Hebuterne, in tents floating in a sea of mud and slush across which those gifted with a sense of balance could slide but never walk. And we, too, got up on the ninth and looked at the sun and knew what was going to be said behind, where there were waterproofs and clean sheets and green grass. For it was a perfect morning. It was obviously far too good for regimental officers to be alive.

So we got our orders and on the tenth we marched back to Mesnil, where we were to stay the night before moving up the line on the eleventh. The attack was to begin at 6 a.m. on Friday, November 13.

The roads just behind the line were, of course, almost impassable, and it had become bitterly cold. Snow was still lying in places, though the rain held off. On this point the Staffs had guessed right, and now, at last, the die was cast. The preliminary bombardment had already begun and the preliminary retaliation. Three hundred yards outside Mesnil the road was blocked with the debris of two transport wagons and their horses, victims of this preparatory zeal. It was not, in the circumstances, an enchanting spectacle and my horse refused so absolutely to pass it by that I dismounted and walked the rest of the way. I have never been on a horse since.

Mesnil was cold. It always was; it was the only place we ever struck in all our wanderings where any kind of comfort was utterly impossible. There was nowhere to sleep, nowhere to sit, nowhere to look and nowhere to walk. The abject discomfort of our battalion, reduced by casualties and sickness to barely 400 men in six short weeks, was a grimly humorous commentary on the efforts of the powers that were to ensure that we went into the fighting fit and at full strength. It wasn't, of course, any one's fault in particular. It was just the last throw of the year's campaigning, and we were the last piece. It was a last desperate gamble against all odds, as it seemed; had not our dyspeptic General Shute reported on us time and again as unfit to go into action, and it was by mere chance, not intent, that our still-despised Naval Division and the 51st (Highland) Division, had landed up side by side in front of Beaucourt and Beaumont Hamel. The positions we were to attack were reputed unassailable and we were reputed utterly unworthy assailants. The weather was doubtful; the ground conditions lousy. As usual, there were no reserves. So began one of the decisive battles of the war, which no one expected to have any consequences at all. Least of all the Germans.

We ourselves had a few expectations. General Paris had

told his battalion commanders before he was wounded that man for man and officer for officer the Naval Division was incomparably better, in his judgment (and he had never praised the Division before), than nine-tenths of the Divisions in France, and that it was here, in the Ancre valley, that we should show it. His successor's very different opinion irritated but did not wholly convince us. Officers left out of the attack bombarded me with bitter complaints, and one at least came up the line and led his company, in direct defiance of orders. The most difficult hours, from my own point of view, were those from dusk on November 12 till dawn when the attack began, for we were holding the line and were responsible, therefore, for superintending the assembly of the four battalions who had to be massed, mostly in the open, on our battalion frontage, in front of and immediately behind the front line, in battle order. If the Germans had spotted any movement, a major disaster involving far more lives than anything that could ever have happened on the last night of the Gallipoli evacuation was inevitable. Everything passed off well and by midnight we had synchronised watches. The bar was opened and our company commanders came in for drinks.

It is probably a good thing that the work of preparing for a battle under trench-warfare conditions is so extremely disagreeable. It is, of course, pleasanter to step out on to the battlefield from a ballroom, and pleasanter still to step off a battlefield, as we had done ten months before, on to a well-appointed ship, where you only had to ring the bell to get a whisky and soda. But after three days such as we had gone through during which no one could have had more than a couple of hours of sleep, there was undoubtedly, as we remarked over our drinks, "a great deal to be said for being dead." If we had had orders, as we half-expected, cancelling the attack, I really believe that our discipline, never our strong point, would have broken down. And yet we knew, as a matter of

certainty, that most of us (all of us, it turned out) would be dead or wounded in twenty-four hours.

We were in the front wave of the attack, with Freyberg's Hood battalion on our right, attacking up the valley. Next to us was Ramsay Fairfax's Howe battalion. Behind us, to pass through us to the second objective, was Burge's Nelson battalion. All of them our friends. The only reference I remember to the future was Leslie Wilson and George Peckham deciding that as they were forty and the rest of us not much over twenty it was they and not we who ought to be killed, because they had had a grand time and we had missed ours. The Gods decided otherwise, for the first officer killed was Vere Harmsworth, whose twenty-first birthday we had celebrated, oh, how wisely, only four weeks before. I had said, in proffering some toast, that for war were needed the pre-eminent gifts, patience and a sense of humour. "We supply the patience and the Staff supply the humour." The Staff had certainly shown their sense of humour in trying to make Vere Harmsworth a staff officer, but his ardent temperament was anything but patient, and I found him, in the petrifying cold that comes before a November dawn, eager for his battle and only too certain of the outcome. I had looked out on the German lines far too often not to share his expectations, for I knew that whatever the Army orders might say as to the position of company commanders in the attack, he would be in front.

I had also a wholly unexpected talk later that morning with J. C. Hobson, an old Westminster and Oxford friend, whose machine-gun company had been detached from its own division to support our attack. He said that he had come up to have a drink because he had heard, quite truthfully, that the Naval Division always had drinks wherever they were. But I knew that he had really come up to say good-bye, a fact which I found a little disconcerting, as he claimed to have

second sight. Perhaps he had, as he was killed a few months later, leaving behind him, like the rest of his contemporaries, nothing but the memory of a hope.

Or is it more honest to say the memory of an illusion? The illusion of youth, holding in its hands the fortunes of the world. Well, we know better now, but that was very much in my thoughts on that November morning, as I moved up beside Leslie Wilson to the front line a few minutes before the battle was due to start. There is a famous chapter in that Victorian classic, *The Fairchild Family*, which begins, "My children, have you ever seen a corpse?" I ought to have begun this chapter with the more generalised but more pertinent query, "Have you ever seen a battle?" I had seen several, even before that cold November morning, but I had never seen one from the ground floor, so to speak. I had always before been just on the fringe, in support, or in local or brigade, and once, on a golden day of summer so long ago, in Army Corps reserve. Now we *were* the battle. Without us it would be an overwhelming and possibly fatal disaster. "Is everything all right?" Leslie Wilson asks, to keep me quiet, probably, as we stand waiting for hell, to be followed, who knows, by death and judgment. I reply that as far as I know, everything is. Watches are synchronised: I've seen to that myself. Battle stores were moved twenty-four hours ago. Every one is in the right position, in touch with the units on the right and the left. That also I have seen with my own eyes. They have been there all night, almost in the open, and freezing in the coldest dawn in history. We were to have given the men rum, but some wiseacre decided that men fought better when they were sick on an empty stomach.

As the moment drew close, we were silent. The whole world was silent, and God, still in His heaven, must have received the prayers of very many sinners turning their thoughts to Him as all men must *in articulo mortis*; a call for

mercy from what an ill-assorted cohort of the undeserving. I had my watch by me, and it was the second hand that I was watching. Wilson, graver than I had ever seen him, was doing exactly the same. The horrible thing, for us, was that it was not *our* battle. In a matter of seconds the four hundred officers and men would have passed out of our knowledge and control. We were to go forward and establish our headquarters in the German front line as soon as it should be occupied; "a report centre" was the phrase employed. A solitary eighteen-pounder went off, shattering the silence. Then it broke.

"Hell let loose." That is the fashionable phrase, but it does not correspond to any recollection of mine. The massed artillery of two armies was raining down on the narrow quarter of a mile from the front line where we were standing to the German front line. Every variety of shell was dropping, but we only saw the lines of infantry, first of our own men, then of the Nelson battalion, disappearing into the mist in perfect order and sequence. Any barrack square in Christendom would have been dignified by such an exhibition of precision. Here, for hundreds of simple and Christian men, was their hour of opportunity. Here all grievances were forgotten and all enmity healed. "They went like Kings in a pageant to the imminent death." I shall never see a sight more noble. I was, you see, in the front row of the stalls. Eight lines of men passed me so closely that I could see every expression on their faces as they faded into the mist, and among all those men walking resolutely to wounding or death, I saw not one expression of fear or regret, or even of surprise. We stood there for a quarter of an hour, and I remember turning to Leslie Wilson and saying, "No one has come back." We wanted, of course, a message to say, quite comfortably, that we had captured the front line. Then we could have sent a message from our own notebooks, and everybody would have been pleased and we should have gone forward to establish our

"report centre." That would have been charming. But it had just not happened. And there we were, lost in the fog of war, and incidentally in an infernally dangerous place, since the enemy's counter-barrage was well down over No Man's land and our front line. We were supposed to stay where we were till the news came. We stayed for another ten minutes. Still none came back, not even a wounded man. Wilson was looking more and more troubled, then suddenly his face cleared of anxiety. I knew him so well that I was ready for his question, "Hadn't we better go on and see what's happening?" "Go back?" would have been a question. "Go on," was an order. So we went.

I had laboriously acquired a revolver for the battle, but in my right hand I carried all the documents adjutants are supposed to carry, including even the orders for the battle, in case we ever arrived there. We knew enough by now, however, to realise that if we got anywhere at all it would be by luck, and if we got anywhere near our destination it would be by using our wits. Then suddenly, as I was trying to think if I had forgotten anything, I felt a blow and realised that my left arm had been shot off. I remembered the story of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Uxbridge. Lord Uxbridge: "They've shot off my leg, sir." The Duke: "By Gad, sir, they have." So, like the Duke, I looked round and found my arm hanging somewhere at my back, but, alas, no revolver. Oddly enough, I hadn't been knocked out. Indeed I walked on a few yards, looking for my arm, and was really only overcome with the pleasure of finding that it was still there. Then I subsided into a shell-hole, and Wilson relieved me of such papers as he wanted, while one of our own orderlies stayed with me and bandaged my arm, with very great skill, incidentally.

So that was the end of my dream. No heroic exploits, no triumphs, not even "a triumph of organisation." Just three miles of retreat in Gallipoli and thirty yards of advance in

France—net gain to the enemy, 5250 yards! And that was all. For it was obvious, inevitable, that it was just here, in this shell-hole, that I was to die. This conclusion was not based on any romantic guess but because, looking over the rim, I found myself staring straight at the Germans in their own front line. Seventy yards or so ahead, Leslie Wilson had been hit through the lung, and I was shown where he was. On the ground in between, and beyond, I could see our men dead and dying. Those not in shell-holes had no chance, for the Germans were firing machine guns to rake the ground and the artillery of both armies had a barrage down. Luckily no devil of genius has yet invented a high explosive shell that bursts downwards and unless a shell landed in our shell-hole, we were safe enough, as long as we didn't look up at the Germans. It wasn't bravery but merely vulgar curiosity which led me to look at them a great deal. When I was hit and for some hours later, they were distinctly truculent in appearance. Later they waved at us in a more friendly manner, but they remained a menace, at any rate to me, for almost every two hours our excellent artillery persisted in shelling them with eighteen-pounders, a perfectly futile action and worse than futile when the range was short and every other shell fell by my own precious shell-hole. Of course, the gunners could hardly be expected to know how I was feeling about it. Inevitably as the day wore on I began to feel even more keenly for no one likes to be killed uselessly even by their own artillery, and it was becoming clear that the Germans who had caused the trouble, who had, in fact, annihilated my own battalion, would in time be compelled to surrender. That in fact, is what happened, for Alan Campbell steered a tank against them early next morning and they did not belie the increasingly benevolent attitude they had taken up during the day by any fanatical resistance. There were six hundred of them and General Shute's explanation of their presence was that the "strong point" from which they emerged

had been overlooked by our own battalion in the mist. As our total casualties in the battle exceeded the numbers who went into action both in officers and men (this being made possible by the arrival on the fourteenth of about fifty men and three officers as reinforcements) the exact reverse was evidently the case. The real lesson was that the "strong point" *ought* to have been overlooked, and that our attack should have taken the lines of least resistance to the left and the right of it. But these variations from plan were impossible under the tactics then employed, a lesson which Ludendorff learnt and put into action at Caporetto and in the first great battle of March, 1918. In that battle the Hawke battalion was to fight its way back against odds to the identical trenches from which we had set out so proudly on that fateful morning of November 13, 1916.

But not the same battalion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FOOD AND DRINK

THE failure of Gallipoli altered the *tempo* of European history. The blood bath of the Somme altered its course. The Gallipoli campaign marked the end of the long eclipse of the Mediterranean powers, the end of that long dominion of the Atlantic seaboard which Marlborough consolidated, whilst it intensified and quickened the collapse of European prestige in Asia. The tragedy of the Somme will have even more surprising consequences, for it will be found to have marked the doom of the democratic regime in Western Europe. Yet Gallipoli was hailed as a triumph of staff-work and the Somme as a costly but very real triumph of democracy in arms. The war of which they were a part was certainly to end with the dismemberment of Turkey and the apparent triumph of democracy over autocracy, militarism and the *ancien régime*. Those who look only to the immediate sequel will therefore continue to point to the gigantic irrelevance of wars and to the transitory and deceptive character of their consequences.

We were, however, far wiser at the time of either event than we were in 1918, that brief after-glow of the nineteenth century, when defeated causes appeared for a moment transfigured in the brilliant light of victory and defeated men took on the appearance of gods.

To be foolish before the event is the almost inevitable destiny of mankind. To be foolish after it is the special and unnecessary failing of democratic politicians. "After all, what did it matter? Here we are again!" is their perpetual chorus. Everything looks much the same. The war, the plague, the strike, the economic collapse, the constitutional crisis, whatever it may be, is over. London looks much the

same and the Greek Syndicate is back on the Riviera. There is once more ice at the Club; top hats are seen again and they are making money on the Stock Exchange. There is talk of a revival of Liberalism. We're all a little older but we've all kept our jobs and without more than a breath of scandal. Let us go on and pay no attention to the dismal Jimmies of the Right and the senseless agitators of the Left. The more we are together the happier we shall be. Truly we are a great people, and our policemen are wonderful.

It wasn't at all like that in 1917, when I was in hospital in London with time to listen and, for the most part, with energy enough to think. Why should it have been? We had suffered for two years a series of the most costly and unmistakable defeats ever inflicted on British armies in the field. No one had any other story to tell. It was not a question of pessimism. There were no pessimists; we *knew* we were going to win, but we knew that it would never be the same again. Some virtue had gone out of the British system, of which we had been so complacently and irritatingly proud. In a sense, the great victory of Beaumont Hamel and Beaucourt, which filled the newspapers for weeks from the end of November, 1916, was symbolic. What a perfect commentary on our great military effort that it should be, after all, the Naval Division which "had advanced farther and taken more prisoners in a single day than any other division of the British army since the beginning of the war." It was not quite fair, of course. Fame, like disaster, is seldom exactly equated to merit and the brave Highland Division lost a lot of deserved publicity to Bernard Freyberg and the Naval Division not because they had been a whit less gallant but because the Naval Division's striking and quite unexpected success had a fitness in the general picture, a harmony to the general mood, which made it the only possible story for good journalists.

And not only for journalists, for the story was known

in higher places and provided a singular commentary indeed on General Monro's unsparing condemnation of the quality of the troops at Gallipoli and on General Cameron Shute's equally blunt report to Sir Douglas Haig on our fitness and moral. *Littera scripta manent.*

It was not, as I recollect it, and I recollect it vividly enough, because for a whole year I had nothing else to do, that people were vaguely disquieted or tired or suffering from strained nerves. It was much more definite than that. On Gallipoli the reputation of the daring, the unorthodox, the poets, the amateur strategists and the adventurers had been staked. Gallipoli had failed. We were no longer the England of Drake and Hawkins, of Clive and of Wolfe. That was evident. But there was another England, "sounder" if less spectacular, more Victorian, the public-school England, specially created. it might seem, for such an occasion. The England that played the game, that accepted with unswerving loyalty the hierarchic divisions of society, which never thought and never argued, which tightened its belt and carried on. The England of the Stock Exchange, the Rectory Field and Lord's, the England of Ian Hay and the first hundred thousand. Whom the "clever" had abandoned, these defended, and they were to save the sum of things under the leadership of the old army, last repository, so we were told, of the old aristocratic tradition.

And if indeed it had been so, had the regular army been the army of Havelock and Outram, of Gordon and Wolseley, Napier and Roberts and Kitchener in his prime, the dream might well have come true. What could not such men have done with the first hundred thousand. But alas, the leaders and the led were all of a pattern. The old army and the new were, in sober fact, one and the same. In both there were, inevitably, a handful of aristocrats, of men of eccentric and forceful personality, of men inspired by that peculiar and deep English mysticism which has its roots in the Authorised Version of the

Bible, of men with that God-given capacity for leadership which no curriculum can altogether destroy. But the army had long ago, almost since the days of Arnold, quite since the turn of the century, become the embodiment not of the aristocratic but of the public-school tradition, a professional career lived out within a hierarchic system of routine promotion, the loyalty remaining, the leaders missing, every one doing their best for the sake of every one else, the respect given to the rank and not to the man, all good fellows together behind the scenes.

And now the England of Asquith and Douglas Haig and Ian Hay had gone down to a defeat more shattering than the England of Winston Churchill and Ian Hamilton and Rupert Brooke. And every one knew it, men as well as officers. What the men wanted was personality in their leaders. After the Suvla disaster, I met a sergeant-major of the new army who had been in the South African war and I asked him what he thought about it. "Ah, Sir," he said, without a moment's reflection, "if we had only had Buller there!" Superficially it was a grotesque comment, but after France I knew what he meant. These men wanted leaders with a touch of individuality, of obstinacy, of devil. Such men might have led them to heaven or hell but they would never have let them be strangled in red tape.

The press, waiting on the expected battle, had sung the praises of the new armies all through the Spring and early Summer of 1916. They had told us that the public schools were going to see us through. There was going to be no more nonsense. I challenged this gay assumption in two articles in the old *Pall Mall Gazette*, inspired by my acute embarrassment as adjutant when two young public-school boys of eighteen who had served with my battalion in the ranks through the Gallipoli campaign were suddenly commissioned. The picture of harassed adjutants crying out for young public-school

cricketers was, I pointed out with some acerbity, just moonshine. What were wanted at the front were men with experience in dealing with other men; men with initiative, capable of taking decisions on their own; failing such men, the only possible substitutes were trained minds. Kenneth Hare from Belgium came to my assistance in the correspondence columns by reminding the horrified readers of the *Gazette* that Drake had invariably been accompanied on his voyages by a quartette of musicians, but the public, in May, 1916, remained unconvinced. In January, 1917, the public was equally convinced the other way. We were still all good fellows together, and we were going through with it, but the illusions were dead, with so many thousands of the good fellows.

"Another little drink wouldn't do us any harm." That was the note of 1917. We had got to fight it out; without leaders, without plans, and possibly without allies. The Asquith Government had fallen and there was much talk for a few weeks of energy and vision at Downing Street at last. But the news from the Front contradicted the chorus of praise with which the new Government greeted its own accession. Actually, as we only learnt much later, the fall of Mr. Asquith's government produced not business but bustle, not drive but paralysis, and lost the world the last remaining faint hopes of an early decision to the conflict. Joffre's 1917 plan had been for a vigorous and immediate renewal of the offensive on the old front in January, 1917. Instead of this, the Germans were allowed to escape almost unmolested across forty miles of open country over a wide front to the Hindenburg line, an achievement which made Sir Charles Monro's retreat from Gallipoli look merely silly. If that was a miracle of staff work, then the German retreat must have been a miracle straight from God Himself. Clearly neither the new politicians nor the old generals were going to help us much, as the audiences at the Alhambra, where George Robey and Vi Loraine were doing

far more than Lloyd George to keep the flag flying, realised only too quickly.

The only news from the Front, until the great retreat began, was of the Naval Division, who attacked twice on the Beaucourt front and carried our line on to the ridge above Grandcourt. A deluge of "efficient" army officers had descended on the Division after the battle of the Ancre, presumably with the idea of preventing any recurrence of that irregular exploit, but the decisive success of the operations in January was, in fact, due to the quite unauthorised return of Arthur Asquith to the scene of battle. He had been forcibly removed to G.H.Q. before the Ancre battle by Sir Douglas Haig, out of concern for his father, the Prime Minister, whose eldest son had already been killed. On some Staff pretext, I forget what, Asquith managed to appear on the scene of the January battle, and as the new Commander of the Hood was wounded at the start, Asquith managed to take charge of his old battalion, and in due course (all Generals being, as usual, far away and out of touch) of the whole brigade position. And so we won our battle.

It was a characteristic achievement. Arthur Asquith was the finest of all our amateur soldiers, and the most respected. He was from Winchester and New College but he had long ago escaped into the world and had no illusions about old school ties. His dominating gift was a quiet, patient and inquiring mind inspired by a profound humility to go on learning. Having known men and cities he had learnt a lot, but he came to us with a mind still open to impressions. In the first two years of the war he had learnt more than some generals learn in a long professional career. His promotion to Brigadier in the autumn of 1917 was a generous admission of a professional competence which was certainly unrivalled among all the famous civilian soldiers of the Great War. He had inherited, evidently, his father's gift of seeing through to

the heart of a problem with a ruthless, if detached, logic, and, unlike Lord Oxford, he came to the war with a mind and body still fresh and vigorous. He had a rigid economy of manner and expression and a genius for inspiring confidence, as much among the regular officers as among ourselves. He had no need to advertise. He never employed a "gesture." He was irresistibly convincing—a born leader who was allowed to lead—the rarest event in war.

He had a gift, also, for healing quarrels, and his achievement on the Beaucourt front in January, 1917, hastened the end of the war over the Naval Division personnel, which had been waged with far more bitterness than the war against the Germans, since October, 1916. Some of the "competent Army officers," a few of whom were competent, remained with the Division, but, in general, the Division's ability to look after itself was realised, and, by the end of the war deeply appreciated by harassed Corps Commanders suffering from the progressive deterioration of most of the Army divisions. This deterioration was not due, of course, to anything but the defects of organisation which made most of them by the end of the war mere haphazard amalgamations with no cohesion and little tradition.

I saw something of the Army personnel, as it was at the end of the war, when I was commanding the Naval Division Officers' School at Aldershot in 1918. This school was for officers newly commissioned from the Army cadet battalions and if any organisations of this kind figure in our plans for the next war (as Bernard Freyberg tells me that they do), things will go badly for us. In the first place, the officers were almost uniformly of the wrong type. They had been selected, mainly, from orderly-room clerks. They brushed their hair and were what old ladies in Kensington used to call "well spoken." Almost all of them had been at good secondary schools. But they were not leaders. They had been chosen merely because, at a distance, they looked like officers, and even then, only like

officers of the late 1916 pattern, the shadows of a shade, in fact. Worst of all, they were as to ninety per cent Yes-men, and in recommending them for commissions their Commanding Officers had been at the old, cynical game of playing safe. None of these men would get drunk or tell a senior officer to go to hell.

In their cadet battalions they had been taught literally nothing of what was required. If they had been given their commissions largely because they looked *something* like officers, at the cadet course they had been taught nothing except to look *exactly* like officers. They knew how to come on to parade. They had a good word of command. They could drill a company. They were smart in their movements. In other words, they would not let down any Colonel in front of any General. It was all very nice for the Colonel and the General but rough luck on the men whose lives would be in the keeping of these *papier-maché* soldiers.

I had, as a rule, three weeks to teach these officers to think and to act on their own initiative, to argue and to become at least potentially insubordinate. I don't suppose I succeeded, but it was interesting work. No one else had ever tried to interest them in war as an art. No one had ever tried to tell them even in bald outline of the principles of strategy as applied by the great captains, or to make them understand that a subaltern with a platoon attacking a strong point is not an unimportant young man about to get killed, but a god with the powers of life and death, with the duty of creative activity, a whole army at his command and the whole military experience of the world at his disposal, to apply or misapply at the peril of his immortal soul—a field-marshal's baton no longer in his pocket, but in his hand.

And so I made my school into an army on occasion, with skeleton battalions and brigades; or turned my embarrassed and puzzled young clerks into exalted staff officers doing

reconnaissances preparatory to the marching and counter-marching of armies. Of course in the end we came back to the platoon, but at least we came back with some ideas and some ambitions. At Blandford it was easier than at Aldershot, for I could fight old battles again on Cranborne Chase, at Wimborne and round Bradbury Rings, where the Roman and his troubles lie buried. And sometimes with Langham Reed, a brilliant and charming friend—who was the only one of us to have his death announced on the posters, not because of his charm, but because when he died in 1935 he was a director of the Arsenal Football Club—I used to go over to Crichel and spend a week-end in Edwardian England with the Alingtons. Lady Alington was a sister of Lady Buchanan, wife of our late ambassador in Petrograd, and from her I heard first the story of the death of Rasputin, since so much disputed: how the poison, administered in the pink sugar cakes of which he was so fond, worked and he collapsed and, it seemed, died; and how, when all seemed over, he returned to life, overcoming death itself by his tremendous strength of will, only to steel the courage of his enemies to a deed of horrifying but effective violence, against which even that præternatural strength possessed no armour.

But Blandford, for all its compensations, was peopled by ghosts, of men and of hopes. It was January, 1918, before I returned to duty, and England in 1918 was a strange land. The witch doctors had lost their magic. The generals at home no longer pretended omniscience and the colonels frankly pleaded ignorance. The civilians had at last come into their own. We had got to win the war in our own strange, blasphemous way. No one had anything to offer us in the way of help or even advice. But it was no longer our war that we had to win. That is the bitter truth that lies at the heart of the agony and disillusion of the post-war period, even to this day.

The world was already, in January, 1918, in open revolt against the old order. Mutinies in France, mutinies in Italy, revolution in Russia; and in England, open dissension between the Government and the Generals following the long agony of Passchendaele, where tactics foolish to the point of criminality had wasted thousands upon thousands of lives. The facts were known, but there was in Downing Street a paralysis of will. The strictures passed on Mr. Asquith, Lord Grey and their few loyal colleagues had been unjust. Yet the army had welcomed the change because they imagined that Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister and virtual dictator would at least end the epoch of memoranda and belated compromises, that even if he acted rashly he would at least act, that he might lose the war but that he would, at any rate, end it. It was not to be. Mr. Lloyd George, as more than one of his colleagues has told me, was tireless in his energy and brilliant in his receptivity to new ideas. He was a great departmental minister. But he was not a Chatham or a Pitt. On vital issues he could never make up his mind in advance, nor allow any one else to do so for him. He neither dismissed Haig nor trusted him. Hence the fatal delay in the spring of 1917, while the Germans retired to new and almost impregnable positions; the muddle over the United Command; the grotesque failure of Nivelle; Passchendaele and its inconclusive slaughter; the wasted battle of Cambrai with no reinforcements in France; and the extension of our line and the simultaneous reduction of divisions to nine battalions. Much is being said to-day in defence of the Fifth Army and the Higher Command, and by Mr. Lloyd George in defence of General Gough. Yet in January and February, 1917, we all knew the facts, not from documents or political speeches or apologies but from the men on the Fourth and Fifth Army fronts. The Naval Division moved south to a position on the flank of the Fifth Army in February to find chaos and despair. Defeat was in the air. Some of the rear

defences, including the famous Green Line, were not even dug; they existed, and on March 21, they still existed, only on the map. Yet the whole world knew when the German offensive was coming. Despite the lesson of Caporetto there was still no effective defensive system beyond the familiar three lines of trenches. The only novelty was that the front line was now to be lightly held. It was not held as lightly as the lives of the men who manned the lines behind. The responsibility for these things is divided between three people, Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Douglas Haig, and General Gough. No argument can shift it.

Herbert Fisher told me only the other day how he was sent out by the Prime Minister in February, 1918, to see Sir Douglas Haig's staff and to ask, in his capacity as a distinguished educationalist, how it was that among the tens of thousands of men between twenty-five and forty distinguished in the arts and sciences, in the learned professions and in the management of men, only five had been found possessed of sufficient intellectual and moral energy to justify their appointment to the rank of Brigadier-General, while, from the cruelly-depleted ranks of the old professional army, some 1000 men had been found equal to this great responsibility. As for Divisional and Corps Commanders, not a single one had been then or at any time chosen from all the millions of a great nation in arms.

It was a pertinent inquiry, and the answer from General Headquarters was revealing. Promotions from below implied the making of vacancies from above. In modern trench warfare there were few casualties among generals, and they had few opportunities of showing marked distinction or incompetence. Even if it were suspected that some Army Commanders, Divisional Generals or Brigadiers were not very brilliant, how could they be sent home on greatly reduced pay unless they had committed some serious error ? It was an odd and astonishing doctrine. The March disasters followed almost immediately on its enunciation.

And yet, to be stationed at Aldershot in the summer of 1918, was to learn why, although we nearly lost the war and by all the rules ought to have lost it, and although, but for the German Foreign Office, we must have lost it, we nevertheless won it. For Aldershot in May, 1918, was as it had been in the beginning and ever shall be. Generals of the pre-war vintage surrounded by immaculate staff officers plastered with decorations; elaborate guards and ceremonies, inspections and field-days; the war of the rifle and bayonet elaborately practised for all the world as if it had been 1914; the Senior Officers' course in which battalion drill was the *pièce de resistance*; the rifle range, which provided the culmination of infantry training. Even my officers' school had to carry out an elaborate and dangerous exercise on the range, masquerading as a platoon in attack and delivering a frontal attack with live ammunition. I have never been more frightened in my life.

When Sir Archibald Murray inspected, he sent round a map two days before, showing his position in the inspecting cohort of his immense staff, and the position which the senior officer of the unit under inspection should occupy in the procession, presumably lest some junior officer should embarrass the C. in C. by rubbing up against him. At Aldershot, we were told, in writing and well before our arrival, things were "different." The free and easy days were over. It was a distinct privilege to be there at all, and it had to be paid for.

Luckily we had, in command of our reserve battalion, a brilliant tactician who wisely determined to play the military at their own game, and conducted the most elaborate and unnecessary ceremonial with the White Ensign every morning and evening on King's Parade, thus proving once again that the children of this world are at least as wise in their generation as the children of light.

It was, on the whole, good fun. Playing at soldiers always is, provided it is done at Aldershot and not at the Front. But

not for ever. I tried to get to the United States on a propaganda tour and got as far as an interview at the War Office. I should have got further, but unfortunately the Army Order asked for officers of the rank of Captain, and I failed to make it clear that although not a Captain I was a Lieutenant R.N.V.R. which was the same thing.

"Your name?"

(*I gave it.*)

"Your rank?"

"Lieutenant."

(*Explosion during the course of which the Army Order was held up to my nose.*) "Can't you read?"

"A little, Sir." (*This was, of course, a tactical blunder but irresistible.*)

"I don't understand you. Are you, or are you not, a captain?"

"Not an army captain, Sir."

"Very well then, are you a captain in the navy?"

"No, Sir."

(*Triumphantly, but still gallantly*), "That's what I've been trying to explain to you. You're not a captain at all and not eligible for this appointment."

(*I made another attempt to explain the position, with what I hoped was appropriate humility*), "May I explain the position, Sir?" (*The choice of phrase was clearly unfortunate*).

"On the contrary, I am trying to explain it to you. Once more, what is your rank?"

"Lieutenant R. . . ."

"I don't care what kind of Lieutenant you are."

At that point I gave up. America was clearly not for me then, nor, as it turned out, for eighteen years. America's gain, perhaps, but my loss, for the circus when it went was a good one. Nevertheless there was a certain symbolism in this, my last military occasion, and certainly in retrospect the most

incredible of all. As I have written it, I have done less than justice to it, for actually the interview lasted a good twenty minutes and repeated itself at least three times but never at a pace which permitted me the full utterance of the mystic "R.N.V.R." after "Lieutenant," the addition of which would have been my passport to the New World, and a great deal of experience of men and cities, to say nothing of politicians. I suppose, looking back at this ridiculous fiasco, that it was all my fault. It is certainly arguable that a young man incapable of explaining his real rank to another young man was unlikely to be strikingly skilful in explaining the justice of the Allied Cause to the American Middle West. The truth is that I never really expect strokes of luck; they are not the kind of thing that happen to me. I have never believed in my star, but only in myself, which is not by any means enough.

And so across the street to Whitehall, where for four years my days were to be spent learning the nature of that new bureaucratic government, which was to become the characteristic and deteriorating vice of our age.

The Ministry of Food in midsummer, 1918, was the busiest and most strangely equipped of all the war-time ministries. Ships were being sunk all through 1917 and although the introduction of convoys had conquered the submarine menace, the shortage of shipping was, if anything, intensified in 1918 by the demands of America. Butter and margarine, sugar, bacon and meat were the commodities of which the shortage in the shops was apparent to the man in the street, but the first task of the Ministry had been, not "rationing," but the supply and distribution to the wholesalers, and behind the scenes almost every staple commodity was under "control" by the beginning of 1917, and remained under control long after the war. This side of the Ministry's work was largely in the hands of business men, though E. F. Wise, one of the most

brilliant if unorthodox of war-time administrators, was in charge, if I remember rightly, of Oils and Fats until in due course he became Second Secretary to the Ministry in the autumn of 1918.

As long as there were no problems of retail distribution to the consumers, the different committees and commissions of business men worked well, but by the beginning of 1918, food queues began to appear in the shops and rumours of hoarding and profiteering rained in on harassed ministers. Behind the public outcry was the social and political unrest; was the Government doing everything possible to win the war? Were the rich and comfortable bearing their share of the hardships? Hence the insistent demand for the rationing of essential commodities, culminating in the great coupon rationing scheme of 1918.

The first (sugar) rationing scheme had failed by the time I joined the Rationing Division of the Ministry in June, 1918. The new rationing scheme was more ambitious. It set out to perform two distinct objects: to provide a guarantee to the consumer and to limit the supplies to the retailer to an amount sufficient to enable him to fulfil his guarantee. This involved, in the first place, tying the consumer to one source of supply for each commodity; in the second place it involved checking in some manner the retailer's outgoings of the rationed commodity. The chosen instruments were two: the coupon and the counterfoil. The coupon (which the consumer gave to the retailer in exchange for his ration) was in shape and appearance like a stamp, and the coupons were issued in books containing, I fancy, a thirteen-weeks' supply. The counterfoil, which the consumer had to lodge with his chosen supplier, was simply a strip of paper on which the consumer wrote his name and address.

The shopkeeper was supposed to collect the coupons in exchange for the ration, and to forward them, in envelopes

supplied for the purpose, to the Ministry. There they were to be weighed, and the weight, shown to four points of decimals, would give the amount of coupons, which would show the amount of the particular commodity due to the retailer to bring his stocks back to where they stood before. Given sufficient time, the scheme was foolproof, but in practice it was quite unworkable. The thousands of retailers sent in their coupons to be weighed days, and sometimes weeks, late. Some of them sent them in in the wrong envelopes (which upset all the calculations); others, apparently, kept them, pending their return to the Ministry, in bowls of fat or melted sugar. In any case they were so overladen with foreign matter when they reached the counting house that their weight bore no relation to that appropriate to their numbers. The effort to weigh the coupons and so to check the justice or otherwise of the retailers' demands was, in the result, a failure, but the public never knew it, and the native honesty of our race pulled us through.

Sir William Beveridge is credited with the invention of this, the second and famous rationing scheme, which was in course of construction when I arrived at the Ministry. This may or may not have been the case, but the brains of the war-time rationing were certainly supplied by my first chief, Frederick Phillips, now Controller of Finance at the Treasury and the ablest, in my experience, of all our public servants. Above him was S. G. Tallents, now Director of Public Relations at the B.B.C. whose genius was rather for suave and impressive appearances at conferences and councils than for the more laborious tasks of creative administration. Indeed his manner, invariably charming, and his method, neat, precise and complaisant, was strangely irrelevant to the scenes of argument and frantic haste which accompanied the preparation of the new scheme.

When our revolution breaks out, the Terrorists will be well

advised to appoint Sir Stephen Tallents, no doubt by then Lord Tallents, for his brilliant career gives a new meaning to the *carrière ouverte*, as public relations officer; his effect on the *moral of the terrorised will be admirable*, while the Terrorists will be able to rely on a minimum of interference. So it was with the Local Authorities, on whom devolved, much against their will, the main burden of the rationing scheme. They left the endless conferences charmed and reassured, but they got by the next post a fresh tale of duties inexorably compiled by Philips and his minions, of whom I, as the youngest, was naturally the least.

The key point of the new rationing scheme was not the coupon but the counterfoil, which is, in fact, the key to all effective rationing. The coupon was, I suspect, a sentimental tribute to Sir William Beveridge, who invented it; it was certainly completely superfluous and did no good to any one except the printers. It was useful only for the oddments, among whom the principal classes were soldiers and sailors on leave, seamen on weekly articles, nursing mothers, invalids and travellers, people, that is, who could not obtain their supplies from the same shopkeeper all the time, or who were entitled to *more than the usual ration. Still, the coupon was never dis*placed in popular affection and the public believed that the success of the rationing scheme was linked with it in some mysterious way. It was, in fact, an impostor, but unlike so many war-time impostors, it preserved its façade until 1919 when, under my own rationing scheme, it was given quiet and decent burial, thus providing an answer to the question, "When is a rationing scheme not a rationing scheme?" "When there is no coupon."

Had we reintroduced the coupon in 1919 there would have been a public outcry at the reimposition of war-time restriction. Doing without it, we reintroduced an infinitely more rigorous and exacting control without any one saying a word. Ask any

one to-day if they remember the peace-time rationing system and they will tell you that there wasn't one. And there, if you like, is proof of a real miracle of staff work. It was mine.

Rationing the consumer, however, was only the spectacular and easiest side of the problem. The detailed organisation of distribution from the docks to the shopkeepers' counter was the real task and it revealed some of the most astonishing cross-currents of trade. Sugar, if I remember rightly, passed through three or four hands, and margarine through two or three, before it reached the retailer, and travelled backwards and forwards in the process, often as far as from London to Liverpool and back again, before going back to a point half a mile away from its starting point. It would have been interesting to unravel the history of some of these transactions. Why should a wholesaler in Birmingham get his supplies from a London or a Cardiff factor; why should a secondary wholesaler in Newcastle go to a wholesaler in Birmingham; and why, still more oddly, should a small grocer in Manchester obtain his supplies through Newcastle? Each link in the chain originated probably from some excellent reason, a family connection, probably, or the blandishments of some super-salesman or even, perhaps, a casual conversation in a railway train. A novelist might find a theme here, justifying the ways of business to minds accustomed to the less romantic practices of the public service. The Ministry's policy in 1918 was to leave this fantastic chain of supply untouched, partly because the rationing of the consumer had been an afterthought superimposed, in response to public outcry, on the control of bulk supplies to the wholesalers, partly because we were still, in 1918, frightened of the public. It is curious to reflect on this to-day, when Whitehall is besieged by tradesmen of every kind passionately asking for control, subsidy and cartels. In 1919, I was bolder and cut out the whole of this maze of meandering foods and distributed sugar and margarine direct from the

nearest wholesaler to the surrounding retailers. Every one told me I couldn't do it, but I did and without interfering in any way with the customary chain of payment and profit. The ingenious can solve the riddle.

We in Whitehall were also strangely unaware of the vast reserves of administrative talent possessed by the officials of local authorities. Actually it was on the food offices staffed by these officials that the rationing scheme in any case depended. They had to issue the cards and to receive and check the retailers' demands. They had to deal with the innumerable problems of removals, "institutions," "caterers," and, in seaport towns, with the victualling of ships and seamen. Our task was to provide them with the instruments for regulating and rationing all these classes, and our series of instructions mounted rapidly in numbers and were revised almost daily as new problems arose. What amazed me in the Civil Service was the inversion of the Army method and custom in almost every respect. In the junior ranks of the administrative hierarchy there was almost every kind of inefficiency, and as you went up the ladder you met with a steadily increasing degree of efficiency, combined with a greater degree of information and courtesy. I never met in the Civil Service, with two exceptions, a high official who was other than considerate and charming to a junior colleague, though they could and often did deal ruthlessly, on paper, with their equals in rank. It is, of course, ridiculous to pretend that all civil servants are great administrators, but the odd thing about the service, even in war-time, was that the best men usually had the best jobs, and that, generally speaking, the senior officials knew a great deal more than their juniors. This was due, I fancy, to the Civil Service system, under which work flows upwards instead of, as in the Army, downwards. As officials get older, this means that they are, in effect, pitting their brains against those of several younger men, instead of keeping the younger men in their

place by issuing orders to them. However important the problem raised, all correspondence in a government office goes first to the junior administrative official in the branch concerned, who will submit his own proposals for dealing with it to his immediate chief. How often the process is repeated depends, of course, on the importance of the question. It is easy to satirize this procedure. Basil Clarke and Ernest Benn did it brilliantly just after the war in a delightful publication issued in an imitation government office file, dealing with Silas Jonas's application for cow cake. The vice of the Civil Service is the writing of clever and evasive "minutes" prompted by the fear of creating a precedent. "Let the fellow have his cow cake and get on with it," is the business man's reaction, but the civil servant has always in front of him the possibility of a million such requests, and a fusillade of Parliamentary questions asking why, if one has been granted, others have been refused. To find the possible objection to any action is thus the self-appointed intelligence test of the civil servant, and if possible repercussions are missed by the first official, it is the pride of his chief to repair the omission. By the end of the argument the objections to any course of action may have mounted so far that a general paralysis sets in. This however is rare, and to do the Service justice, it is usually reserved for problems obviously unimportant. The Service has the technique of efficiency as well as of delay, and it usually knows which to apply.

I remember an intermediate minute from one of Phillips's subordinates arguing the rival merits of two proposals for, let us say, rationing hospitals. The minute began hopefully: "We are asked to approve a scheme for rationing hospitals in . . . " and ended three pages later with a reluctant: "on the whole and despite the objections I have mentioned we might agree." Phillips read this effusion with growing irritation, and then with his characteristic smile, minuted the following to

the permanent secretary: "Please see the first and last sentences of Mr. ——'s minute. I agree." That is the Civil Service manner at its best.

The Ministry of Food was inevitably a rag-time Ministry for its quota of genuine civil servants was small, and some even of these had acquired the war-time retinue of typists and personal assistants and the war-time habit of dashing about in cars driven by expensive blondes from conference to conference. After all, petrol was rationed, and not to be driven about London by a beautiful chauffeuse was a sign of painful mediocrity. The Ministry of Food, with offices at Grosvenor House in Park Street and at Palace Chambers, had a fleet of cars, and some of the high officials lived permanently in transit. But that was the mood of 1918 when Gaby Deslys would hold up the traffic in Bond Street in her majestic cream-coloured Daimler; and other famous actresses would appear at the Carlton or the Savoy daily in well-known War Office cars; when widows were wonderful and only a few harassed civilians had time to get on with the war. Like the Generals, the Ministers had lost their magic: the Cabinet sprouted into committees which every one down to the charwoman attended. I remember one great day after the Armistice when the question of discontinuing the licensing of new retail businesses came up, and there was great pressure from the East End for the removal of these restrictions, which after all had only been imposed to preserve the businesses of soldiers at the front. The Cabinet were to decide. It was, I suppose, the Home Affairs Committee, but the only thing I remember was the Cabinet minute that no action should be taken "till Mr. Jerrold has been consulted." I had to attend a special meeting of an East End Borough Council, when the agitation was at its height, to discuss their grievances and to get an interesting insight into the paradoxes of left-wing politics. Here was a predominantly Labour Council, protesting bitterly against the Socialistic

action of an individualist government, all because their friends were not allowed to open shops to take the custom away from the one-man businesses closed till their owners returned from the front. Every case, of course, was argued on the lines of hardship to the working men and women who had to walk an extra fifty yards or so after a hard day's work to find the nearest shop. It was an unctuous and unsatisfactory display of utterly insincere zeal. But the expert politicians knew when they were beaten. They dared not tell the truth which was that, now that the war was over, sentiment was no longer too powerful to make competition with the soldiers' businesses unremunerative. Instead they had to prove that the population had increased to the point where there was, in any case, a need for more shops. On this formula we parted the best of friends, and I was promised conclusive proof that in every case the population of all the places in question had increased to more than the requisite amount. In fact we got, as I anticipated, not one solitary application under the formula. I doubt greatly if any one ever took the trouble to look up the statistics. The agitation began as a racket, and went down like a rocket, a useful lesson in practical politics, for it left no ill-will behind. They had poured out bucketsful of hogwash to help their friends, but they would only have been contemptous of us had we believed them. And they would have been right. Frightened governments, not forceful agitators, are the parents of revolution.

Unfortunately, in other departments, the government long before the end of the war was very frightened indeed. The public were getting war-weary and strange ideas were in the air. Even the public schools were getting unreliable, owing, it was said, to the lack of experienced schoolmasters. Victor Gollancz at Repton startled the War Office by his enthusiastic teaching in defence of the Russian Revolution and was forced to leave the staff. He joined the Ministry of Food for a few

weeks, before the War Office discovered that he had got, as punishment for his misdeeds, a better job, and, quite unofficially, a Colonel came to see me. "We are determined," he said, "to stamp out this Liberalism." It seemed to me rather a large job for the War Office to undertake in the middle of a war but the Colonel was adamant. He felt, he explained patiently, that if Gollancz's good fortune became known in other schools, all the masters anxious to get jobs in government offices would start defending the Russian Revolution, whereas if . . . "But surely he's not fit for active service," I asked. "Oh, certainly not," the Colonel replied (he evidently felt that it would spoil the tone of the fighting if Gollancz were associated with it), "but we thought perhaps Singapore . . . it's very hot there now," he added meditatively. I made it clear, having received Tallents's instruction, that the Ministry would raise no objection if our official was required for military service, but would certainly protest if any attempt were made to use his nominal military rank as a second lieutenant in the O.T.C. as a weapon to secure his transfer to some less useful civilian post. The Colonel felt our attitude unpatriotic and unhelpful but clearly had expected nothing better; he had heard, he hinted darkly, that he was unlikely to get much assistance from us. "Why should you," I asked genially, "since this is the Ministry of Food and not the Spanish Inquisition?" However, the last word lay with the War Office and Gollancz sailed for Singapore a week later. Before he got there the war was over, but the Colonel was right about the climate. Gollancz spent six weeks in hospital and almost qualified for a pension.

Meanwhile, the Armistice. How often, like every other young officer in every army, had I discussed with my friends what we should do on the first night of peace. Never really believing that we should be alive, we had planned the most fantastic happenings. Here was the reality, and I was surrounded, far away from my friends, by a howling mob,

composed mainly of women and Dominion troops going mad. I made my way laboriously from my office to the Author's Club and spent the rest of the day playing chess. I fancy most people felt as I did. Who the people were who were making the noise in the street I never knew. They were, I suppose, that hysterical British public that crowds public spectacles and mobs film stars. Peace hath her victories, we are told, not less renowned than war. Perhaps; but the crowd that cheered the Armistice was vastly different from the crowd that cheered the King at Buckingham Palace on August 4, 1914. That was the real England then. Was this the real England of 1918, I wondered. I wonder still.

I ought, I suppose, to have been profoundly grateful for being alive, and "profoundly grateful" is ridiculous. I ought to have gone down on my knees and thanked God for his mercy. I am conscious of having done nothing of the kind, not from impiety, but because I was quite without any feeling of exaltation. I had become part of that vast busy machine of modern government, which has no cares because it is omnipotent and no rest because it is omni-competent, which enjoys power without responsibility and exercises authority without being required to bring the gifts of leadership. I understood at last what it must mean to be on the staff of a great army—not to be jockeyed into a soft job but to be, by nature, training and profession, a staff officer—how inevitably matters of life and death must become a part of the academic routine, counters in a professional exercise; and, still more significant, how victory and defeat, the incalculable chances and accidents of war, must cease ultimately to have any poignancy; how the technique must become the reality and the objective the loss of all objectivity. The regimental officer spends his time looking for guts, and the staff officer for grease. Grease sticks.

The answer I suppose, is that it takes all sorts to make a world. After all the business of government had to go on,

war or no war. People still required to be fed, and would be less, not more patient under the inevitable restrictions now that the battle was over. To keep the machine running requires a certain stoicism and a large measure of indifference to all personal considerations. The result is good for the public but bad for the bureaucrat, for whom the politic facade of aloofness from the excitements of the hour becomes a wall of iron shutting out in time all the emotions and ardours of ordinary people. Yet even that turned out to be necessary, for the war of peoples turned insensibly, before many months were out, to that civil war of citizens which has been the central motif of all our politics since 1918.

The instinct of self-preservation is strong among democratic politicians. For the war of nations, little had been prepared; the fighting was to be far away. Scarcely had the excitements of the armistice died down before the preparations for the civil war were begun.

The food shortage continued, of course, to be a reality for some months. Armies had still to be fed and ships were still to seek, and the Americans had to go home. Then, on top of this chaos, came the apparently unexpected demand of our own armies to come home. This surprised the politicians, who had elaborated an ingenious scheme for the return, first, of all men in key positions, and for the very gradual re-absorption in industry, as peaceful trading conditions returned, of the rest of the Army. Unfortunately it had been forgotten that the men in key positions were, in nine cases out of ten, the last men to be called up. That was our first post-war crisis, solved by Mr. Winston Churchill who, now that the war was safely over, had been permitted to take charge of the War Office. But the sudden return of millions of men with gratuities and out of work donations, the vast continuing expenditure on shipping and armaments, and the orgy of private spending by all classes marked the beginnings of an inflationary crisis, and led to

angry demands from the heroes for money to keep their homes going, The Ministry of Reconstruction issued pamphlet after pamphlet; government staffs rose to the incredible figure of four hundred and seven thousand, but prices at the beginning of 1919 were 150 per cent above the pre-war level and were still rising. At the same time, demands for decontrol were beginning to be heard from industry. Already, by March, 1919, the elaborate inter-Allied Shipping organisation had been broken up, and transport difficulties were superimposed upon the continuing shortage and rising price of essential foodstuffs. The result was an endless muddle with alternations of rationing and de-rationing, and continuous moves from one set of offices to another and back again, until at the end of the year we found ourselves where we had begun, at Grosvenor House. In the middle of it all the civil war actually began.

It was in September, 1919, that the first great transport strike broke out and the emergency scheme at which we had all been working for some months came into operation. The popular feature of the scheme was the milk depot in Hyde Park, which got all the limelight, to the delight of the eccentric and voluble Clifford Penny who claimed responsibility for its organisation. The rest of the Ministry got no credit for the organisation of reserve stocks of rationed and controlled commodities in all the areas, or for the unostentatious but effective arrangements made for replenishing the stocks as occasion demanded. My experience of war "panics" had taught me that the obvious way was generally the best and when I was rung up by one of the Food Commissioners for immediate supplies of margarine I decided that the organisation of a convoy of lorries attracting attention from strikers along a hundred miles of road was a roundabout method, and told the Commissioner that I would send him his margarine at once by train. He expressed his incredulity but I assured him that it would be all right. I had found that, as is usual when civilians

play at soldiers, everything was being done in the most sensational fashion; letters were being sent by telegram, and telegrams by special War Office messenger, lorries guarded by troops were delivering supplies to small grocers who ordinarily sent the delivery boy round with a bicycle. And so it occurred to me while I was telephoning that, although the railway staffs were working day and night organising emergency services, in all probability no one was using them. This proved to be the case. The railways were much touched that any one had remembered them and offered me as many trains as I wanted. Supplying the country with food, when one knew exactly where it was and exactly how much was required (and our ordinary rationing scheme told us that) was a very easy task; a prolonged emergency with no rationing scheme in the background would be a very different matter. The problem, as we had learnt then but have probably forgotten to-day, is not one of limiting the consumer but of tying him to one source of supply. Once you have done that you have to ration only a few tens of thousands of retailers instead of forty million people. Unless you reduce your problem to these manageable dimensions at the start—which means some preparation in advance—the problem of the emergency distribution of food in a prolonged strike will prove insoluble. In 1926 we relied on local stocks, but the next strike will be better organised.

In 1919 we failed to break the strike not because we could not distribute inland but because we could not get the food out of the Docks. We had no Army. We put up an impressive appearance of energy and as long as the strike lasted everything went well, but behind the scenes, which meant at Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool and at the London Docks it was not so easy. How long could we last out without the food from the Docks? We gave the Cabinet some information on that question on the fourth day of the strike, and two days later the strike was over.

I have a vivid recollection of the meetings of the Food

Council at that time. I did not belong to it but I had to attend in the absence of my chief, Louis Infield, and I realised then exactly what the Committee of Public Safety must have been like. Nothing more dangerous could be imagined. There was a great air of self-importance, the desire to dominate a crisis by statesmanlike utterances and swift political measures. But as the Food Ministry was not concerned with high policy and the crisis was solely concerned with high policy, there was really nothing to be said, and as the political and administrative chiefs who composed the Council knew nothing whatever of the technical problems involved, there was nothing they could do. The Food Council was, in fact, with notable and insufficient differences in its personnel, the replica in miniature of any democratic council or committee trained and equipped to discuss policy and required to become an executive body. In particular it exemplified the fatal and characteristic defect of our present system of government, in that it was supposed to be there to check, examine and control the actions of the experts, but could rely for the necessary technical information only on the same experts on whom it was sitting in judgment.

Once the State has left the sphere of policy and descended into the arena for action, there is no room for the amateur. The only men who can direct its action efficiently are men who know the practice as well as the theory. Such men are dangerous. The most dangerous and therefore the most efficient man on the Food Council was Frank Wise, later a prominent Labour politician, who would have attained high political office had he lived. He was then Second Secretary to the Ministry, but it was he, and he alone who insisted on examining the only fundamental question, which was the question of time, and its bearing on policy. It was absolutely no concern of his. The Food Controller, F. O. Roberts, was insistent on the rigid impartiality of his department. He was there to make the

best for as long as possible of the available supplies. It was no concern of ours whether the supplies were sufficient or not, nor what bearing their relative sufficiency or insufficiency might have on the latent revolutionary threat. Frank Wise brushed all this aside and called a meeting of the experts in the afternoon of the fourth day of the strike to discuss this very question. His view was that on the first day when the public failed to get their rations the transport strike would become a general strike; therefore the strike must be settled before that happened: therefore we must give a definite warning to the Government in terms which they could not ignore. And so, while for four mornings we had discussed interminably how to prolong the strike, we decided in one afternoon to end it. Thus is history made.

It was, like everything else political in those days, supremely unconstitutional. By 1918 the line between administration and policy, between civil servants and politicians had become hopelessly blurred. There was a secret "Cabinet" of eminent civil servants masquerading as private secretaries who had learnt from their political chiefs the A to Z of politics and had been careful to teach their chiefs not much more than the A B C of their own technique. Mr. Lloyd George gave the system his imprimatur. Who could say whether the Downing Street secretariat—Philip Kerr (as he was then), Edward Grigg and William Sutherland were Civil Servants or politicians? The same question could be asked of J. C. C. Davidson or Sir Maurice Hankey. These, with Sir Warren Fisher, Sir Herbert Creedy and one or two others, were the men who laid the foundation of our policy. Some of the more fortunate of the war-time administrators had by 1919 been given seats in Parliament and full political rank, notably Sir Eric Geddes and Sir Robert Horne; others like Arthur Salter remained in the background till the great post-war experiment in international government gave them a new

field to conquer. Frank Wise was as able as any of them, but very junior in the Civil Service when the war started, and, never reaching the top, he took service eventually with the Russian Government, where the complete fusion of policy and administration, inseparable from an economic dictatorship, gave scope to his peculiar gifts, and his still more peculiar politics.

In fact, in that extraordinary period, you could say that wherever two or three men of knowledge and determination were gathered together, there was the Home Government. Politics, for the politicians, meant foreign policy. The rest was a scramble. "It was all delightfully informal; we just got up and helped ourselves." As the armistice receded the scramble got warm. By the middle of 1919, every one was on the run, looking for the permanent jobs, if they were astute, or for the racketeers' jobs at the peace conference, or almost anywhere on the continent, since almost everywhere there was an inter-Allied Commission controlling or decontrolling, fixing boundaries, rationing food or merely giving advice. Had I been anything less than a fool I should have joined in the *sauve qui peut* early in 1919 and gone to the Treasury, but I preferred my kingdom of the blind at Grosvenor House and duly became a kinglet, only to find that the responsibilities of kingship prevented me from sitting, as I had intended, for the All-Souls Fellowship in the autumn. I can't imagine that I should have been elected, despite my lack of all qualifications; still, there were precedents, according to Ernest Barker, who had inspired me to the inconclusive impertinence of sending in my name. However, the N.U.R. decided otherwise, and in any case, I liked my taste of power. One should experience all these things once.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POST WAR

"WE had these years of preparation embittered by controversy, fraught with growing anxiety, and then—the thunder and crash of Armageddon! And don't we all feel," Mr. Winston Churchill went on, "that when that was ended, something in our lives was ended too . . . Don't we all know that the rest, for us, doesn't matter. The rest is for the distant generations." I apologise to Mr. Winston Churchill if my memory of an unreported speech is false. But that is the echo which has lingered in my mind from a memorable oration delivered not so many years ago at one of our Naval Division dinners. I remembered it partly because it struck the same poignant note that I had heard the year before on a similar occasion from that ardent apostle of peace, Henry Nevinson: "I suppose I shall not live to see another *Great* War." But I remember it chiefly because it expresses so simply the belief that so many of us have been fighting against for nearly twenty years.

The war for me ended with the collapse of the strike of October, 1919. That was the last, I felt, of the days of crisis. Hysteria had not been allowed to pass bounds, and when the fit was over sanity would return to the world. It was all over. It had thundered and the world had crashed, but our policemen were still wonderful (although recently on strike), and now we were back again where we had left off, more or less, five years before.

Suiting the action to the mood, I went back to school and sat for the first Civil Service Examination since 1914. It was

not, happily, the kind of examination that they held then or now. It required only an occasional gleam of intelligence and a decoration or a wound. The gods let us down gently from our pedestals, but the shades of the prison house were real, none the less. The war was over, and we had to be born again.

The reality was less unpleasant, for us who were lucky, than the dream. Still, we were a bit too old to enjoy its modified compensations: marrying on nothing a year, living in Chelsea, reading for the Bar or doing schoolboy's work in an office ought to have been fun. Somehow it wasn't. We found ourselves, senile veterans of five-and-twenty, clinging for some time to the past, organising gatherings of old officers, attending Divisional and Battalion dinners, fighting old battles over again, in a foolish effort to stave it off.

The Government was at the same game. Half the anomalies and iniquities of the Peace Treaties were due to the subconscious desire not essentially to keep the old hatreds alive but to maintain the old tension. The absence of a state of emergency was the one emergency for which the whole world was unprepared. If the Allies had presented a reasonable treaty I am sure the Germans would have refused to sign it! If only they had refused to sign the treaty actually presented.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes the process of getting back to 1914 was in active operation. The Brigade of Guards got back into Scarlet and the Treasury set about restoring Treasury control. After the march of armies, the wriggling of martinets. Instead of the swift footsteps of youth to lead us on to the new era, the patient shuffling of elderly politicians spelt its doom before it was born. It was an extraordinary period: no wonder it saw the birth of jazz. While Mr. Lloyd George played the statesman at Versailles, Mr. Asquith was returned for Paisley and cheered through the streets to the House of Commons; Mr. Austen Chamberlain returned to the Treasury to which he had first been appointed in 1903; Lord Curzon

presided over the Foreign Office, and Mr. Arthur Balfour, fresh from the Congress of Berlin, exchanged reminiscences with M. Clemenceau, whose memories stopped short at 1870. No wonder that no one, not even in the highest Government circles, not even on the editorial staff of the *News of the World*, knew whether we were going on or going back.

Less exalted people were in the same dilemma. On the day peace was signed I was at Wimbledon, watching Max Decugis playing Kingscote. It was the old unsophisticated pre-war Wimbledon, the players were heroes of my school days, and they stopped in the middle of a set when Kingscote called Ritchie out of his seat, which was two away from mine, and asked him to get Decugis some "cold tea." And to complete the perfect pre-war picture, I drove back from Wimbledon with a friend and was delayed on the Common with a puncture. The car, too, was pre-war. Thence, however, to the Hyde Park Hotel, where the people were not, and where paper streamers were being thrown at one, so in despair we left and drove across London to see George Fairfax at the Russell Hotel. There we spent the evening, in an hotel bedroom drinking whisky and soda, until it was time to go to bed. It had been our war, once, but it was not our treaty. These things may have been to Lord Riddell's peace, but they were not for us.

And so with everything. For after all we never did get back, although our work at the Treasury was one long vicarious and highly official struggle to do so. We had the debris of all the mad Coalition schemes to clear up: Dr. Addison's houses, Mr. Hodge's Pensions, the Foreign Office subsidies, the tragic chaos of the out-of-work donation and the shoddy camouflage of "extended benefit." All was grist to Phillips's mill, for I had got back, better late than never, to my old chief, and we worked for a couple of years like galley slaves. When Phillips moved to the more exalted realms of finance he was succeeded by Alfred Hurst, who was later to make history

when he wrote Sir George May's famous report, which brought down the second Labour Government in ruins and inaugurated the era of middle-class dictatorship under which we live at present.

Phillips and Hurst were, but I should say "are" for they are both still young men, curiously dissimilar, alike only in the degree of their abilities and the high measure of their charm and disinterestedness. They were in these respects what every public servant is expected to be by people who usually expect far too much. Hurst, however, was by temperament optimistic, and therefore full of practical zeal. Phillips was grimly pessimistic, and therefore content to inculcate wisdom and to watch with a rueful smile the evasions with which the politicians received his advice. If we ever achieve a dictatorship, and if the dictator is advised by Phillips, we shall have the wisest government ever experienced in modern times, but Hurst got, and will always get, more out of the typical parliamentarians. He even got the most dangerous bunch of them out of offce. One cannot rate any public servant's ability higher than that.

We were, of course, a long way from the day of reckoning when I was a junior official at the Treasury. We were still in the inflationary boom, and then, a year later, in the first throes of deflation. Our main task, however, on the so-called Supply side, was to try to reassert the old-fashioned system of Treasury Control. Unfortunately the laws of the Medes and Persians have laid it down that it is for Parliament to decide the policy and for the departmental Minister concerned to carry it out. Treasury Control in the popular sense of the term can therefore never be applied constitutionally to the great spending departments. Treasury Control under the constitution is concerned only with the proper locking of the stable door; it is not concerned in the least with the nature of the horse inside. In the days when all the ministerial horses were in the stud book

this doctrine may have been good enough. In the days of the Second Coalition Government the condition was not fulfilled. Gladstone was undeniably dead, and Dr. Addison and Mr. Fisher and the two Macs were very much alive.

When I first went to the Treasury the Peace Treaty hadn't even been signed. The great day when I arrived at my office and found a hundred and ninety-six files on my desk marked, "Bring forward at end of the war," was still six months off when I was first sent to work in a dingy basement with the present permanent secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, and the present head of Sir Thomas Inskip's secretariat as my colleagues. There was at that date no registry system for linking new correspondence with old, and H. G. Vincent, Donald Ferguson and myself, spent, like other junior Treasury officials, half our days in the attics looking through manuscript precedent books for references to old files which might have a bearing on the subject under discussion. Then we would return, dusty and extremely cold, to our basement bearing armfuls of files, mostly irrelevant. No file contained more than one letter, the inevitable minutes, and the reply. The only hope was that some senior official had at one time tied a number of related files together and given instructions that they should be kept in illicit association. Such good fortune was, however, rare. My first big hunt was for the papers about the East China Railway which dated back several decades and required a couple of journeys to transport. Then the real excitement of the chase began. Had any one recently, say during the last twenty years, summarised the issues and noted the treasury policy over the years? Was there, by any chance, in the official letters any résumé of the history? Alas, very seldom, and if, as in this case, it was a Foreign Office matter, never. The F. O. attitude to the Treasury was that of pre-war Eton to the Grammar Schools. In certain circumstances etiquette demanded the writing of an official letter

asking the Treasury for sanction, but the Grammar School boys were expected not to strain Etonian courtesy too severely by treating the request as more than a formality. It meant in fact no more than the hope expressed by a rich and successful man to a poor and obscure one, with whom he has by mischance spent an evening, that he will meet him again. We have all heard such a hope charmingly expressed and some of us may have occasionally had the misfortune to see the innocent victim, if he is very young, walk heartily into the trap, and extend an invitation to lunch next day. Those who have had this experience will understand the attitude of the Foreign Office, half sorrowful, half indignant, when the Treasury asks for further information.

The Foreign Office, in my time at any rate, invariably got away with it. This is partly because they were not, and still are not, part of the Civil Service Samurai, partly because the Foreign Office vote is a small one and the Secretary for State invariably a powerful politician. The battleground was therefore unfavourable. It was, indeed, almost suicidal, because the Ministers of the non-spending departments (of whom the Foreign Secretary is the most important) are the only ministers who can be relied on to support the Chancellor in the Cabinet against the closely allied phalanx of the spending ministries. In the circumstances, dealing with the Foreign Office was, particularly for a junior official, no fun at all. Happily, there was plenty of fun elsewhere, since by an insane freak of organisation the seventh Division, as the Treasury Departments are called (7 D. for short) in which I served, dealt also with Health, Education, National Insurance, Labour and War Pensions, and so "controlled" actively much more than two-thirds of the total Civil Service vote. Here was the battlefield, but we were fighting for the most part, with our hands tied behind us, forced always to concede the principle and to content ourselves by preventing its immediate and logical application.

We were, of course, watching the laying of the foundations of the new age, but how many of us were aware of it? Not I, for one. Back to sound finance was our motto, and the reigning ideals were the Victorian Gold Standard and the Elizabethan Poor Law and a balanced Budget. How we were to balance our budget by doubling the burden of our National Debt in terms of goods and services was a problem so obvious that it ought to have excited the curiosity even of the youngest, but truth compels me to state that I never heard it discussed by any of us, while the great ones assumed that interest rates would peacefully fall as prices fell and that our 5 per cent loans would be converted without strikes or hardships by the simple laws of Victorian economics, into two and a half per cent securities. Meanwhile our Export Trade would have revived, international lending would have returned and unemployment would have come to an end.

Confident in these axiomatic conclusions, our chiefs taught us to hold our tongues and get on with the work. Which is what we did. The Treasury correspondence is exclusively with other departments (or, in the Finance Department with the Bank of England) and its representatives, however young, are privileged persons. The very style of our letters had, I fancy, a definite psychological effect. "Their Lordships," whom we never saw and who had no offices at the Treasury, and among whose august number neither the Chancellor nor the Financial Secretary is included, have acquired, in the course of decades, a genuine corporate personality. After all one cannot write twenty letters a day on behalf of even a non-existent body of "commissioners" unless one can endow them not only with intelligence but with feelings. My Lords were not free from the failings of ordinary politicians but they maintained a humorous and dignified reserve which struck a note of its own. I remember, for instance, one indescribable letter from the Ministry of Pensions protesting at a threat from their

Lordships to curtail at short notice some silly departmental activity. "In short" the letter concluded (at the end of the fourth page), "the Minister is constrained to deprecate any decision which might necessitate the adoption of a course of action which he cannot but consider premature." Contrast with this horror John Beresford, in private life the editor of the delightful diary of Parson Woodforde, replying to a request from the same department for sanction for some scheme for hospital beds based on a forecast of requirements in ten years' time: "My Lords note that the Minister considers that the time has come to begin providing the hospital beds which will, he thinks, be required by his department in ten years' time. On the whole, my lords prefer to wait and see."

Nothing brusque here, nothing unsympathetic, but just the patience born of age with a dash of the mellow scepticism born of experience. Their Lordships had indeed shown themselves very ready to move with the times in matters of procedure. There were innumerable standing committees for sanctioning minor items of expenditure, and in a crisis, as in the Irish Civil War, a Treasury official would be sent over with powers to deal with all Treasury matters on the spot. Such posts, of course, were for the exalted, but even as an extremely junior official I found myself representing the Treasury at endless conferences and committees where one learnt more in a few hours than the ordinary citizen learns in a lifetime of the real problems of government, for the simple reason that on these occasions one was invariably the only person who didn't know what he was talking about, a salutary lesson in the virtues of silence—until the time came to ask the right questions.

Sometimes a conference took an unexpected turn. I remember one at the India Office which concerned the disposal of a number of Mesopotamian antiquities sent back to the German Government in July, 1914, which had landed up in

Portugal and had been interned there since the beginning of the war. The antiquities were now claimed by the German Government, by the India Office on behalf of the Baghdad High Commissioner and by the British Museum. The Treasury were concerned only to see that the taxpayer got as much as he could on the salutary condition that he paid nothing for it. I forget the decision that we reached; I fancy the antiquities were brought to England at the expense of the Germans, loaned to the British Museum free of charge and finally sent back to Baghdad at the cost of the Government of India on the understanding that the money was ultimately to be recovered from Iraq. Anyway it must have been a good Treasury deal because I agreed to it, but the really exciting moment came when in response to some question as to the educational value of the antiquities, Sir Wallis Budge launched into an eloquent account of the origin of civilisation, which had its roots, he said, in the narrow triangle of land between the Euphrates and the Tigris. That civilisation had begun in Egypt he stoutly denied, and he was even more contemptuous of the prevalent theory of the independent origin of the different cultures of the past. That conference was certainly long, but it was well worth while.

During 1921 and 1922 I was engaged in writing the history of the Royal Naval Division, a task which took me at lunch times to the War Records section of the Committee of Imperial Defence. There I lunched off sandwiches and read the War Diaries and such papers bearing on high policy as I could find. I learnt one thing clearly from this laborious task, and that was the futility of basing history on contemporary documents. Almost all the battalion and brigade diaries and all the records of higher formations are worthless even as a record of what happened. As a record of what mattered they are not worth a moment's consideration. The reports of Divisions, Corps and Armies repeat the same mistakes of fact, and the judgments

they pass are stereotyped and not seldom interested. I was allowed to see every extant paper on the Antwerp Expedition and on the Gallipoli campaign and most of the papers on the operations in France and expected that what had puzzled us as regimental officers would be made clear. It was not. From all the suffering and death and destruction at the Front, nothing, it seemed, had come back to the great ones behind the lines. If the attack failed, it was for one of three reasons: untrained troops, superior enemy forces or the failure of the attack on one or the other flank. I soon discovered the necessity of checking all statements about enemy superiority and deadly machine-gun fire by the casualty lists and the result was often startling. In one case, in 1918, where an important attack was held up over a wide front for nearly thirty-six hours by the failure of a Brigade to capture a small position in front of them, I discovered that the Brigade concerned had fewer than twenty casualties, during the days when they were reputedly hurling themselves against impregnable positions.

The historian of a Division such as my own had, of course, immeasurable advantages. Owing to its homogeneous character I was always in the position to get two or three first-hand accounts from men on whose judgment, veracity and, above all, memory, I could absolutely rely. Had I been chronicling an ordinary Army Division I should have known intimately very few officers in other battalions, and, in regard to the later periods, none at all. I should have written for my information and no doubt got it, but I should not have known its value. As it was, I always had the clue and, granted the clue, the rest was easy. But one requires a certain cynicism, nevertheless, to read the war diaries to any advantage. There are few limits at any time to our powers of self-deception and none whatever to those of Colonels and Generals whose careers are at stake. It is useless to expect a battalion commander or a Brigadier to say "owing to the lack of courage and determina-

tion of my leading companies (or battalions) the attack failed." Still less can we expect what should far oftener have been said, that the attack failed owing to the complete lack of intelligence displayed in its planning. In illustration of this, the best of my war stories came to me from the personal diaries of F. S. Kelly, kindly lent to me by Arthur Asquith. It is the story of a great reconnaissance by a battalion then "attached" to the Naval Division a few days before the battle of Beaucourt. The need was not to secure an identification but merely to find out if certain posts in the Ancre valley were occupied. Kelly tells how he was waiting quietly in his front line when, to his horror, instead of a subaltern and half a dozen men, a whole army was seen coming up the communication trench, headed by a Commanding Officer, his second-in-command and his adjutant. They met, and salutes were exchanged. The Colonel called a subaltern forward and formally introduced him to Kelly. "Here is" (we will say) "Jones, my best officer. I want you to know him. If any man can do what has to be done, he can." Then, turning to the embarrassed young man, the Colonel shook him solemnly by the hand. "Good-bye, Jones, and good luck. Remember the honour of the Regiment. But if any man can do it, I know you can." At this point Kelly confessed to a certain impatience and a supreme anxiety to get the young man away before he laughed. Off they went, Jones and his men, while the Colonel repeated meditatively, "Good lad, Jones! If any man can do it, he can do it." Then, barely two minutes later, a helter-skelter outside the parapet which must have awakened any Germans in the neighbourhood, and the party returned breathless, but the change of direction had made no difference to its disposition. The party was still headed by Jones. "Sir, I've failed," he said simply. Did the Colonel flinch? Not for a moment. He just turned at once to Kelly and said with perfect gravity, "If any man could have done it, Jones could have done it," and then,

without a word, he turned on his heel and his army moved back down the communication trench.

The story was told differently in the Battalion diary. Without the clue I should have been lost. Indeed this battalion moved always, in the pages of their war-diary, on the heroic plane: every venture desperate; every action gallant; every achievement superb. I came to know them by the end of my researches and they were certainly a fine battalion and extended to their neighbours the same generous appreciation that they conferred on themselves. Nothing but the enemy's overwhelming strength had ever, in the four years of war, stood between them and their objective. Generals, brigadiers, subalterns and private soldiers, the plans, the preparations, the gunners behind them, even the Germans in front of them, were all and always magnificent. Indeed, reading this record it became impossible to understand how the war had lasted more than six weeks. "If any men could have won it," I found myself saying, "they could have won it."

I find myself, as I write these notes, recapturing the chastened mood of 1920 and 1921. These were the years of disillusion and we clung so desperately to everything that brought back the clean and simple past. Some of us never became post-war. In that reluctance we almost all shared—cabinet ministers, civil servants, soldiers, artists and even some of the writers. But we had lost our public. The first pre-war writer to hit the post-war mood was A. S. M. Hutchinson, whose famous novel, *If Winter Comes*, was better than the majority of best sellers but sold in spite of that because it registered the first doubt of the innate superiority of the ordinarily brave man over the timorous "little man" of the new dispensation. The hungry generations had, no doubt, to tread us down, but most of us resented this premature and overlucrative "kick in the pants." Jealousy, some may say, but in those days my works and days lay far outside the literary

racket and I had no thought even of "commencing" author. The success of that novel was just a sign of the contemporary muddle; we were neither getting back nor getting on, but some of us were evidently getting unpleasantly sentimental.

And so I went on with my War Diaries. I got to know, of course, far more of war than ever before. In fact, as a subaltern I was quite at sea; as an adjutant of my battalion, no more than barely competent; my real knowledge of the science of war began when I was teaching at Blandford and Aldershot and was only carried beyond the rudimentary stage when I was studying at the C.I.D. The art of warfare is quite another matter, but irrelevant to the war of 1914–18 because no art can be practised vicariously and no general in the last war ever commanded troops on the field. Napoleon wrote his own orders at every stage of all his campaigns. There wasn't a brigadier in our army who dreamt of doing so, not all of them were even capable of it, and none would have been allowed to do it. They would all have died gladly and proudly with the men to whom they passed the orders, but that is not the same thing. And even that was forbidden them.

I came across, in the course of my researches, correspondence between one famous general and his principal subordinate general on the need for a new attack, and at last I understood why so many attacks failed. "Don't you think we ought to have another shot at something soon, people will say we're doing nothing?" "My dear General, I quite agree, what about a shot at X. . . ? I don't suppose it'll do much good but we certainly ought to show that we're alive."

The gallant General had forgotten that at home, at all events, there was not likely to be any doubt on that score. They published the casualty lists every day. Curiously enough the French, who habitually concealed their casualties, were the only nation who habitually dismissed their generals. I suppose they thought that to publish casualties and dismiss

generals simultaneously would be to deprive war of all its mysteries.

I have often wondered whether I was alone in the first post-war years in living in the past. I hardly think so, but, of course, my remoteness from the new world and its problems was enhanced by the monastic routine of the Treasury. Having spent the first four years of my working life building urgently and dangerously a new, and as I thought, a better world, I found myself confronted with the task of proving that nothing had been done which necessitated any prolonged departure from the habits and manners of five years ago.

The Coalition Government did their best to popularise the Treasury view by a display of cynicism which beat all records. The Peace Treaty, with its flagrant betrayal of the oft-repeated pledge, "no annexations and no indemnities," was the first shock. The sheer folly of the Treaty was the second. Mr. J. M. Keynes achieved a reputation for single-minded wisdom by denouncing these follies in print after he had given up his temporary post at the Treasury. My occasional references to the files of the period did not, however, bear out the view of the lonely and gallant Keynes fighting a desperate battle for sanity. It is certainly true that I found in the Treasury files many memoranda expressing in forcible terms what came to be famous as Mr. Keynes's ideas, but the memoranda were hand-written and the writing was not that of J. M. Keynes but of Hawtry and Basil Blackett. I did on one occasion find a long and rather involved memorandum from the great Cambridge economist, and pounced on it optimistically, but it was exclusively concerned with the grading of typists in Paris, a subject on which the writer's view, while interesting, would hardly be regarded as authoritative. Far be it from me to suggest that Keynes's voice did not cry forcibly and eloquently at the time in what might be called a wilderness, but it was expressing nothing more nor less startling than the current

orthodoxy of Treasury Chambers. Keynes, however, has a niche all to himself in the history of publishing, for he must be the only man who has ever made a fortune by dressing up the contents of the Treasury files in eloquent prose and offering it to the public as an essay in unconventionality.

It is a moot point whether the political consequences of Mr. J. M. Keynes were worse or merely as bad as the literary consequences of his equally brilliant friend, Mr. Lytton Strachey, whom I used to see sometimes at the Savile at this time. Both of them gave a great deal of pleasure to young men; they may be said almost to have objectified the first post-war generation. About 1922 the world suddenly got very full of arrogant and languid young people of uncertain sex engaged in the new Bloomsbury sport of expressing their bored yet intolerant confidence that art and brains ended with them and Maynard Keynes. It seems unfair to attribute any blame for this rather shoddy phase to Mr. Keynes himself, who, after all, had done nothing more than tell the truth. The fact remains that it was he who created the idea which has since held the field among all undergraduate minds, that economics determine politics, and that the students of the one subject therefore have at their disposal the key to all wisdom about the other. It was true that Marx said something like this a long time before, but, as Aldous Huxley has pointed out, nobody would ever have bothered to read Marx if Lenin had not made him a convenient figure-head. In any case, in 1922 it was Mr. Keynes who was read.

Lytton Strachey was really the Bloomsbury counterpart of A. S. M. Hutchinson. The popular novelist debunked Ian Hay's heroes and the eminent litterateur debunked the pioneer of the educational system which produced them. But it was Strachey on Gordon that set the tone. To be dug in the ribs and asked to watch a saint and a hero getting drunk on solitary brandies-and-sodas in his tent was an invitation which a world in ruins

could hardly be expected to resist, in view of the fact that saints and heroes appeared to have contributed so much to the ruins. It is often said that Lytton Strachey was unfair and inaccurate. This is certainly so in one instance; in *Elizabeth and Essex*, he deliberately falsifies a contemporary document in order to acquit Essex from the suspicion of saying his morning prayers. In general, however, as with so much that comes out of Bloomsbury, the trouble was not lack of candour but lack of sympathy. Public life happens to be an art, and it is an art to which literary people are by temperament and training unsuited. To the literary mind only that which is experienced is real, and all generalisations are suspect. Public life, however, must be lived on the assumption that only that which can be generalised is real and that personal experiences are a deceptive irrelevance. Such abstractions as "England," "the working class," "the Empire," "Their Lordships," must, to public men, be sober realities of which they feel themselves a part and without which they feel themselves nothing. Only men humble enough to see themselves as one of a crowd can dominate the public life of their time.

That was the real trouble with the coalition Ministry. In 1921 the first-class brains began to wear white hats and to put carnations in their buttonholes. It was racketeering *in excelsis*. The younger men had had easy and lucky wars—Winston Churchill ever the honourable exception—and they were sailing triumphantly through the peace. But they belonged nowhere and they were getting nowhere. When the ship sank they would be off to the City. It was, indeed, the only place to which they could go. They were neither of the countryside nor of the town; they understood the language neither of the land nor of the streets. They were just first-class brains in pursuit of first-class jobs. Their one great gesture, the Irish Peace Treaty, was their undoing. They had tried to impose on Ireland the rule of the gangsters and they had been

beaten, not for lack of scruple but for lack of courage. They had surrendered not on the point of honour but at the point of the revolver. It was a statesmanlike treaty, but it was not made exclusively by statesmen.

Of course the Coalition Government, for all its glittering infamies, was only doing with reckless ostentation what the whole world was doing from 1918 to 1922. We were all living on our wits. There was no established order, no social or political framework against which one could rest even for a moment. Two whole generations were being forced to think of life in terms of "jobs," and the racket, although the word was not then known, is only the institutional expression of the job-hunting spirit. Just as men seeking God grow up into the body of the Church, so men seeking jobs find themselves involved in rackets. The only two avenues of escape from destitution in those years were jobs and stunts. Stunting, in the parlance of modern times, was muscling in on somebody else's racket, as when Willie George joined the National Union of Clerks and announced over his green chartreuse at the Savile, during one of the post-war Labour upheavals, that he was on strike. Henry Nevinson was also stunting when he joined the Council of Action which some enthusiastic Labour leaders had formed to inspirit the strikers. Lunching with me at the time, he looked round the Savile dining-room, with its air of irrelevant complacency, and said, "It's sad to think that if we win this club will have to close. I suppose you would call that the end of civilisation." I told him that Garrod, still then Professor of Poetry at Oxford, would presumably say so, and reminded him how, when Garrod had been offered a white flag by an enthusiastic woman in 1916, who had said, "Sir, are you aware that in Flanders young men are dying for civilisation?" he had replied with a bow, "Are you aware, Madam, that I am the civilisation for which they are dying?"

Nevinson claims that he has never been on the losing side,

that his reputation as a champion of lost causes is undeserved. But he gets a certain sardonic compensation out of watching the results of his triumphs. I asked him soon after the war what results he expected from women's suffrage. "Well, look at Finland. Both sexes have the vote," he said. "And how they hate each other."

Nevinson used to come to our Chelsea parties and watch the charades, usually written by W. L. George and Cecil King, and always acted by Cecil King, helped by Gladys Peto, Sewell Stokes (lately turned dramatist), A. P. Herbert, Hugh Pollard and Kenneth Hare. One of the parties I remember particularly because W. L. George asked if he might bring a friend, and arrived with a young, slim, curly-haired foreigner who seemed to know every one and be known by no one. People were doing parlour tricks of varying merit, so he said that he would tell a story, which he proceeded to do in a manner then quite unfamiliar, half rasta, half rococo, poised uncertainly between cosmopolis and the demi-monde, impudent, neat and annoying. I asked his name. "You'll know it soon," said George, with his usual accuracy; "Michael Arlen."

To my knowledge I never saw him again until I happened to see him at a distance, in the deserted cocktail-bar of the Hotel Majestic at Cannes, two days before his wedding. He had strikingly fulfilled George's prophecy for his brilliant future, and looked at me with poignant anxiety. He knew he had seen me somewhere, but naturally he hadn't the faintest idea who I was. Had I been a perfect Christian I should have told him that I was no one of importance. As it was, his anxiety was too much for him, and, visibly agitated, he left his drink unfinished. I wonder if, when I am famous, I shall be driven so easily to such desperate expedients. The strangest thing about Arlen is that he was once a regular and brilliant contributor to Orage's famous *New Age*, for which so many of my friends, Ramiro de Maeztu (foully murdered by the

Spanish Communist Government), Maurice Reckitt and Bechhofer Roberts among them, used to write. Arlen then wrote from the heart with the head. In *The Green Hat* he reversed the technique and achieved fame in an age which mistook his sentimental cynicism for a bold and fearless appreciation of the depth and colour of its drab and aimless excesses. Arlen's was an astonishing *tour de force*, and it was bad luck on him that he should have had to give up his place so quickly to Evelyn Waugh, who killed with kindness the follies that Arlen tried to sentimentalise into melodramatic realities.

But for the moment, Arlen was the prophet of his age. He could play with his puppets because he was playing with life. Exiled from their own Eastern land, his parents had experienced the bitterness of a hideous persecution and the world's indifference. To him the demoralization of our Western European society, with its superior claims and airs, was not a matter for poignant regret or for Rabelaisian humour. Forcibly *déraciné* himself he could join in the dance with a gusto to which at that time no English man of equal sophistication could pretend. In a homeless world, Arlen was cynically and pleasurably at home. The moment and the brilliant little man had met.

Save for W. L. George I don't recollect much literature in post-war Chelsea. Grub Street has been dead for at least the length of my adult life. Young journalists are no doubt as conventionally struggling as ever, but they don't struggle in Chelsea or Bloomsbury, but in Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham. When they come to London they are well paid and far too busy to waste time meeting other journalists. The old race of eccentric pressmen is to-day extinct. T. W. H. Crosland was probably the last of them, as witness the great day when, having come into the possession of a pound or two (probably as the result of a lucky bet) he converted it all into half-crowns and stood in Fleet Street, stopping every

pretentious looking man he saw with the bland inquiry, "Excuse me, Sir, but are you Sir William Robertson Nicol?" The reply being in the negative, "Thank God," Crosland exclaimed heartily, "here's half a crown for you." Albert Kinross, who worked with Crosland and Alfred Douglas on *The Academy* in the old days, told me this and many other stories of this eccentric genius, whose war poetry was nearly, if not quite, the best written, and who perpetrated, in a fine sonnet on the death of Edward VII. the most splendidly audacious theft in modern poetry:

"And easy lies the head that wore a crown."

Gone, too, with the eccentrics, is the great race of special foreign correspondents. On August 2, 1914, my cousin Laurence Jerrold, who, as I have already mentioned, was the *doyen* of English correspondents in Paris, was *sent for* by the President of the Republic. What did he advise as the best course for France to make certain of British support? What was the appeal most certain to move English public opinion, and so on? The same thing must often have happened in the old days to the more famous correspondents of *The Times*. Dillon of the *Telegraph* was for years Witte's right-hand man, when Witte was the uncrowned Emperor of Russia. To-day's foreign correspondents, following the lead of their proprietors, are concerned less with news than with policy; the idea being that the views of the English *Times* or *Telegraph* or *Daily News*, framed along certain lines and telegraphed back to the country of origin, will in time create the situation reported as already existing. In at least one or two instances the hope has been fulfilled.

To a journalist by descent, the saddest thing about the Spanish Civil War is the news service provided by the London Press. It reflects invariably the political views of the proprietors, and can never be accepted without investigation. That is something new in English journalism.

The most audacious of the special correspondents of our time was the great Ashmead-Bartlett; the greatest, Henry Nevinson; the most picturesque, Philip Gibbs. But the newspapers, less sensitive than the book publishers to the wanderlust created by the servile state, think that these men are not wanted. If half of what Philip Gibbs wrote in his early post-war novels had appeared in the influential English press, public opinion would never have tolerated the iniquities of the blockade and the peace treaties.

Instead, we had to witness the gallant effort of the pre-war progressives to captain the minds of the new age. Mr. H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* was the first big publishing event of the post-war world, and a little later this veteran Victorian was sent by another great Victorian, Lord Northcliffe, to announce the birth at the Washington Conference of a new age of peace and goodwill, inaugurated by the statesmanship of that daring young Georgian, Mr. Arthur Balfour. Mr. Wells, true to the intimations of his adolescence, wrote his history on the pattern of progress. Lord Tennyson himself had no simpler faith, if more Norman blood. Arnold Bennett, making less noise and more money, was happier in the new age of ennobled cads and ruffianly millionaires. It was a practical age, and Bennett understood it. Wells tried to see it in a pattern, with the world state as its predestined end, with races, creeds and nationalities slowly but very surely losing their power to dominate the mind and the heart. The tribe, the city-state, the national state, the empire, the federation of peoples, the federation of the world—it was a fascinating sequence, and by the simple method of telescoping history into a brief and rather irrelevant appendage to pre-history, Wells made it plausible to the superficial and attractive to the generation just growing up, which surveyed the battlefields and the cemeteries with a too-outspoken contempt, masking a secret envy. But it was that generation, not Mr. Wells's nor my own,

which was to be lost. The distinctive thing about the post-war world, as Edward VIII. learnt to his cost, was that there was nothing post-war about it. The whole intellectual fabric of the years of reconstruction was worthless. It might have been possible to get back to the fool's paradise of 1914; it proved, however, not possible even to exist in the fool's hell of which the rotten foundations were laid in 1920 and 1921. The continuance of tolerable conditions in England till 1930 was the measure of the success we achieved not in going forward to the new world but in getting back to the old. Unhappily, elsewhere in Europe the effort to get back was either immediately vain or was not undertaken. Their Lordships' writ did not run in France or Italy or Germany or Spain or Turkey to check the orgy of political folly and corruption which passed for statesmanship in the first post-war years. Based on the lie about annexations and indemnities and the perjury of the disarmament clauses, framed by crooks and defended by cowards, the peace treaties lacked either moral or political sanction. In such a case the basis of public law in Europe itself lacked a basis, and the regimes which paid it lip service collapsed one by one over the ensuing fifteen years, burying Mr. Wells's history, Mr. Cobden's economics, Mr. Asquith's Liberalism and Mr. Lloyd George's reputation, the Geddes brothers, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's New Jerusalem, Lord Tennyson's dreams, Lord Tennyson's religion, Lord Tennyson's morality and Uncle Tom Cobley and all, beneath the ruins of smoking churches and burning parliaments and a mountain of scraps of paper bearing the signatures of every politician in the world.

When did we even begin to realise what was happening? For me that is hardly a fair question, because in my position in Whitehall, closely connected with Downing Street as it was, one heard a good deal. Besides, the crucial events of my brief sojourn at the Treasury were economy committees. Even Mr. Lloyd George's garden cities had ceased, by 1920, to believe

in the brave new world. Dr. Addison's dismissal was more than the burial of a conscientious politician; it was the burial of a dream, which ended in the nightmare of paying compensation to contractors for the non-fulfilment of contracts to buy thousands of tons of bricks which did not exist, on the condition that the bricks never came into existence!

When the full schedule of these amazing contracts was prepared, and the skilful hand of Sir Ernest Strohmenger had reduced the taxpayer's liability to the minimum, Their Lordships were informed of the situation. The Chancellor, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, not knowing that a special emergency staff of the familiar type (men of push and go—they pushed and the money went) had been created for Dr. Addison's scheme, expressed the hope that the officials responsible for these incredible contracts would be properly dealt with, and the story ended with a terse minute by John Beresford, "This has been attended to. The business men who made these contracts have all been knighted."

The first great effort at economy was, however, delayed until the last year of the life of the coalition, when the then famous Geddes Committee was appointed. It was the first of a series of root and branch investigations of Government expenditure. There was another one in the following year under Mr. Bonar Law's administration and many unofficial examinations later, until in 1930 Sir George May's historic Report brought down the Labour Government, and incidentally promoted a world-wide revolution by bringing the £ off gold and so finally destroying the international gold standard. All the economy reports say the same things; most of them have been drafted by the same officials; all of them, whatever their immediate political consequences, have been entirely without effect on the general level and trend of public expenditure. This is because there is no effective machinery for controlling policy in relation to public expenditure.

Treasury officials and other distinguished public servants get an opportunity of criticising public policy some years afterwards, but as public policies in our new world are irreversible, the effect of their sombre pronouncements is nil.

Even when a first-class crisis makes a reversal of these policies seem imperative, their reversal has to be defended in Parliament as a temporary measure. The extravagances of Mr. MacDonald's second administration were pruned by Lord Snowden and Mr. Neville Chamberlain, just as the excesses of Mr. Lloyd George's second coalition were pruned by Mr. Lloyd George himself (who invented the now famous technique of making himself indispensable by reason of the magnitude of the crisis he provoked), and then again by Mr. Bonar Law. But the only item of Coalition policy which Mr. Bonar Law tried to reverse—the control of rents—led to Ministerial defeats at bye-elections and the control had to be maintained. The National Government, going one better, have by now restored expenditure to a level far higher than that reached by the Labour Government whose extravagance they rebuked.

Was there in fact, no way of escape from the vast Government commitments now in force? And does the only kind of progress possible depend on a further increase in these burdens? Yes and no. One great scheme, only casually considered, for shifting the responsibility for expenditure from the government to unofficial shoulders was the late Lord Melchett's scheme for unemployment relief through the subsidisation of employment. This was rejected on grounds of precedent. A similar scheme had been tried after the Waterloo campaign. The alternative adopted in that case had been the workhouse, and as the inadequacy of that alternative was freely admitted, it seems unfortunate that no better grounds for rejection were to be found. Even more worthy of serious consideration was the suggestion for the promotion of pension schemes through industry, and there is also much to be said for a recent proposal

of Sir Arnold Wilson's requiring all public utility undertakings and other industrial corporations to house their employees. Unfortunately the spectacle of any one except "the department concerned" considering suggestions of that kind is horrifying to the official mind, and as all such suggestions diminish permanently the powers and prestige of "the department concerned" their consideration will be hostile. As long as the Civil Service preserves the rule that the method of carrying out an agreed policy is for the department and the department alone to decide, the position of the departmental experts as the sole adviser of the government will be secure. The unpopularity of Mr. Lloyd George in the service was due only partly to his policy, mainly to his habit of sending for and taking outside advice and then appointing amateur administrators to put it into effect. Certainly the results were disastrous enough and lowered the reputation of the civil administration throughout the country. But all the same, there was in Mr. Lloyd George's method the germs of a necessary sanity. The curious thing is that the Treasury have, in the proper application of these methods, their one and only chance of establishing, in the new conditions, real financial control, and checking the menacing encroachments of the spending bureaucracy.

The departmental experts should never be taken at their face value. Very much the reverse. They are always men of great integrity and usually of very great ability. But after years of departmental service they become invariably more interested in policy than in their own technique. They are thus judges in their own court. The Ministry of Health wants a State Medical Service; the Ministry of Agriculture wants a state-planned and state-directed agriculture. The Ministry of Labour wants to see the whole world enrolled as their clients. The Ministry of Pensions fought a gallant fight for some years for a network of state hospitals with clinics in every town, of which the Ministry of Health was to be the residuary legatee.

When the proposal to nationalise the mines makes its biennial appearance, it is never wholeheartedly opposed by the Coal Mines department. These things are perhaps in the order of nature, they may even be right and proper, but they mean that under the experts' plea of necessity a great system of state-regulated industry and state-controlled thrift is growing up without any expert presentation of the perfectly workable alternatives.

The solution will only be found in turning the supply branches of the Treasury—the branches, that is, that look after the departmental activities and approve their estimates and over whose activities the Financial Secretary presides—(the Financial Secretary being, as need hardly be explained to students of the British Constitution, the Minister who is least concerned with finance)—into a Cabinet secretariat, with which should be merged the anomalous staff of the Minister for the co-ordination of defence. In this way the invidious examination of the proposals of one Minister by another would be substituted (as far as it is to-day performed at all) by the proper and vitally necessary examination of the same proposals by the Cabinet's officers, whose responsibility it would be to see, after taking *independent expert advice*, that all workable alternatives are before the Cabinet before any decision is taken.

It may be said that the only result would be a wrangle of experts and much conflict of testimony. No doubt; but the experts *already* differ and the testimony *is* conflicting. It is precisely this fact which should be brought before the Cabinet when it is taking the decision. It does not need much experience of the realities of government (even the most junior official sees a lot behind the scenes) to teach one that nine out of ten decisions are taken by Cabinets because they believe them to be the *only* solution of the problem, or because, even if they are doubtful on this point, they have no alternative before them. They must either trust their luck as uninstructed amateurs or

let the experts have their way. Even Mr. Winston Churchill, most courageous and pugnacious of ministers, lost his nerve in the end and gave way to the experts on the Gold Standard.

The evil to be cured is much deeper-seated than the outsider realises, for not only are the experts not independent, but they are as jealous as generals or prima-donnas, and their sway is hereditary, by virtue of the system of adoption. We have had nominally half a dozen but actually only one Board of Admiralty since 1919, for the successive boards are the heirs and appointees of their predecessors. Sir George Newman may have retired, but it is Sir George Newman's policy which rules the Ministry of Health, just as it is Sir Daniel Hall's policy which rules the Ministry of Agriculture. As for the soldiers, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* And now, since my time in the service, comes a new horror, leading to increasing power for the adoptive empire. For the permanent heads of the departments to-day are, like the political heads, almost always amateurs, not men who have spent their lives in a department and can at least take on the experts in discussion, but men transferred from another department and usually with little or no administrative experience. How many of the permanent heads of departments to-day have spent their formative years not in administration but in politics, as private secretaries to Ministers or lobbying on Commissions and Committees?

These secular reflections are, perhaps, far from the scope of this book, but they are certainly not irrelevant to its purpose. To have seen even a few of the *arcana imperii* is a privilege for a man still young. I had the good fortune to serve in the Navy, the Army, and the Civil Service through eight critical years, during the last four of which we were laying, mainly by inadvertence, the foundations of that new world in which we live to-day. Getting back was our pre-occupation. The effort failed. To-day there is for none of us, bond or free, materialist or Christian, reactionary or early Victorian, any possibility

of getting back to the old negative state, to the old freedom of trade and industry and money and choice. We can, however, and if we can we must, see to it that we repair those defects of our governing machine, thanks to which we have been hustled at such a pace along an unmapped road. It is quite useless for democrats to imagine that you can educate an entire democracy. The little knowledge which is all that the electorate can possess must lead us, if we rely on it, to catastrophe. The recent incursion of "the people" into foreign policy is proof enough of this. What we can do is to re-balance the constitution so as to allow for the free play and free expression within the constitution of expert as of political opinion, so that the ever-increasing pressure of expert bureaucratic opinion on the small but precious residue of our liberties can be challenged and, it may be, resisted. The only working alternative to amateur adjudication between alternative policies expertly prepared and argued is the non-political state, in which the Government experts are given the only possible corrective to unlimited authority, which is responsibility. But in that case, good-bye to freedom.

And in that case no young man will ever be able to turn his back as I did at twenty-nine on privilege, security and the promise of power to adventure in the world of free men.

Before I left the Civil Service I had seen the end of the last Coalition, the advent to power of Mr. Bonar Law and his administration of under-secretaries. No Ministry ever died less regretted than the second Coalition. Its closing days were alternately darkened by scandal and illuminated by crisis. In the worst days of the Chanak affair, when it was even money on war, the Chief Whip (who was my old friend and colonel, Leslie Wilson) came into my office looking very grave. "What is it?" I asked, "is it really war?" "I don't know," he replied, "but I do know that X. . . . and X. . . . are horribly

bloodthirsty." The blanks stood, need I say it, for two of the "first-class brains."

What was the Conservative Party to do? Could it betray its leader, quixotically loyal to Mr. Lloyd George, or was it to betray its country? That was the question for honest politicians, and Leslie Wilson for one saw it. Wilson was and has since been shamefully attacked for siding with Mr. Baldwin at the Carlton Club meeting. As Chief Whip his loyalty was pledged, it is contended, to the party leader. Wilson put this point to himself on the morning of the meeting. He, of all men, would appreciate its force. But as we talked together the one thing that was uppermost in both our minds was the necessity of a fresher, cleaner and wiser Government, a necessity that was vital and urgent. The Chief Whip's position was the *clou* to the position. There are in every party a number of men who will in all circumstances follow the official machine—the voice of the leader expressed through the Whip's office. But if the machine broke, then Mr. Austen Chamberlain might be beaten. With this in his mind, Leslie Wilson went off to sign his political death warrant in order to salve his conscience. That is the truth about the end of the Coalition.

CHAPTER NINE

THE TREASON OF THE CLERKS

WITH the fall of the Coalition, the long rule of the Liberal party came to an end. You could almost hear its passing bell. It was said at the time that the party had been killed by Mr. Lloyd George. That is to over-estimate the influence of one brilliant man. Liberalism died of a more fatal sickness; it lost its faith. It was killed by a greater than Lloyd George; it was killed by Lenin. It is a commonplace that the Russian revolution was the most important event in the history of our time, but it is not yet a commonplace that its significance lay in the ruin it worked not to the Russian Imperial but to the Western European democratic system. Not only the new Parliamentarians of Geneva were its victims, but the old Parliamentarians of Westminster. We may quite likely see the restoration of the Tsardom, but the nineteenth century system of life and government is dead. No power on earth can revive it.

This question, far greater than any of those settled or unsettled by the war, was still undecided till the fall of Mr. Lloyd George's government. It was decided by the failure of the Liberal leader to challenge the new gospel of Moscow.

It was not enough to make a few slighting references to tyranny. It was to Liberalism as such that Moscow offered its challenge. There was not a little in the philosophy of Lenin that the Tories could have honourably accepted, provided only they had possessed the patience to discover it. There was just nothing that any Liberal could honestly accept. It was not, perhaps, to be expected that the Tories, given the popular anti-revolutionary cry, would exercise much patience in using it. After all, they had been out of effective power, if not out

of office, since the end of the South African War. Honesty, however, was not merely the duty of the Liberals of 1923; it was an absolute if desperate political necessity. The sincerity of their every utterance for half a century was at issue. In making concession after concession to the forces of the Left they had professed to do so on the grounds of principle. Free trade rather than fair trade; free government rather than good government; liberty rather than order. It was a mere coincidence, we had been told, and we had believed it implicitly, that the chief beneficiaries of free trade were the Liberal party's supporters in the poorer quarters of our great cities; that the residuary legatees of the doctrine of free government were the Boers and the Irish rebels; that the only matter in which order was visibly threatened by the admission of political rights was a matter of vital importance to the Trades Unions, whose votes returned half at least of the Liberal party to power. Never mind. We knew the answer to these hyper-critical sneers. Principles are absolute. On that ground every dubious surrender to armed force or political pressure, every concession of public safety to public sentiment, every public school tradition sacrificed to the exigencies of public house oratory, had been tolerated and even defended. In support of the sacred principles of Liberalism, dukes intolerant of government and dustmen hungry for the lack of it, had stood fast, shoulder to shoulder, and at the dukes' elbows was aligned the long, if not strong, phalanx of financial gentlemen ready with a wink and a nudge to do anything for the cause. "It's really no trouble; don't bother to send a receipt." Freedom for ever.

In 1923 the foundations of this historic if no longer dignified structure quietly subsided, leaving only the pathetic ghosts of Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey walking uneasily in the ruins. The unique thing about the moral collapse of Liberalism was that it began at the roots. There are still

Liberal leaders, men of charm and intelligence and even, in two or three cases, of integrity. But there had, it appeared, been no Liberal party for a quarter of a century.

It is the discovery of this shattering fact which has laid the whole world open to the attacks of honest men armed with simple if naïve convictions about public order and public decency. To this day, this strong and turbulent reaction is misunderstood, yet the sequence in time and logic is clear enough. In the name of religious, political and economic freedom, men of conscience and character had made grievous concessions to selfish and disruptive forces. They had secularized the state, unbalanced the Constitution, depopulated the countryside and spread a network of usury over the whole world. The working of this admitted havoc had been the task of the nineteenth century, yet in all that gallery of famous and eloquent men who thronged the crowded Victorian scene, there was not one man of any class, creed or party who would have held that these things were good in themselves. The political conflicts of the century had turned on whether the pearl of liberty, admittedly of great price, was really so valuable as to justify the immense injustices and dangers which its defence entailed. Now, in the new world which began on October 19, 1923, it was to become crystal clear that in exchange for so much surrendered nothing whatever had been gained. Liberty in the new world meant the freedom of the proud, not the freedom of the meek; it meant the entrenchment of majorities, not the protection of minorities; it meant the removal of all restrictions not on the freedom of individuals, but on the freedom of governments; the denial not the assertion of the rights of conscience, because such rights must always be based on the right of the individual, now constantly denied, to own the means of his own subsistence.

As a boy I had learnt from John Sargeaunt of Westminster

that there were only two parties in England—the party which thinks and the party which doesn't. Quite untrue of the leaders, it was broadly true of the rank and file. Conservatism, of course, had its radical wing, with its economic panaceas, and able young men, combining business with the pleasures of sympathy, quoted freely from Mr. Disraeli until they reached the House of Commons. The soul of the party, nevertheless, was given over to philosophic doubt. Men of imagination and high intelligence were to be found, without doubt, on the Tory benches, but in the world in which the rest of us moved, the natural and normal place for all such had been the Liberal party. The Tory leaders had social reform on their banners, but the social reformers, the men and women who practised the gospel which the politicians preached, had been Liberals. Most of the great religious leaders had been Liberals. So, too, had been the scholars, the poets, the philosophers and the historians. They might vote for this party or that on big issues which cut across party lines, but their fundamental allegiance was never in question. These men were the heirs of the Enlightenment. They believed that man had made God in his own image. They believed in the Gospel of Humanity. They believed that man was naturally good and naturally wise. They believed in progress as the necessary and ineluctable consequence of free change arising from free thought. They and their fellow men were creatures of unlimited potentialities, with rights correspondingly limitless, and an innate high moral sense which would ensure against any abuse.

These beliefs were sincere. Pre-war England was essentially and pre-eminently the country of the Reformation. An impassable gulf separated her intellectual life, resting on such premisses, from that of the Continent, where thought was either Catholic or materialist, with extremes either of credulity or cynicism.

This peculiar English culture was implicit in everything

which was seriously thought about this world or the next. Conservatives and Socialists alike took their history from the Whigs right up to 1914. The Establishment and the Dissenters alike took their spiritual enthusiasms from the Puritans and the Covenanters. The moral collapse of Liberalism was thus the collapse of the foundation of all that had seemed for nearly a century the best and the most wholesome in our public life.

The result was the growth of that insidious corruption of the spirit which has destroyed the intellectual life of the last decade, rotted the foundations of our liberty, and degraded us as a people in the eyes of the entire world. Great consequences from small events with a vengeance. For what did the Liberal party count from 1916 onwards? What could it matter what the *Manchester Guardian* thought, or the *Daily News* said? It mattered, unfortunately, a great deal. The support of Moscow, expressed or implied, became the creed of every professedly Liberal writer and teacher from 1923 onwards. It was a betrayal of every Liberal principle. The *Nation*, resolute and magnificent in its independence, began to falter, and in two years was dead. The *Daily Chronicle*, bought up by Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Reading, created a feeling of nausea which choked its readers. The *Westminster Gazette*, that honest old soldier of the Liberal cause, simply faded away. Shortly before the demise of the *Westminster Gazette* one of its subscribers dreamt a strange dream. He saw Mr. Asquith being driven through the streets of Edinburgh in an old cab, drawn by a decrepit donkey held up by the shafts and the reins, the harness tied together, like the once famous battle equipment of the Naval Division, with string, the driver senile and on the verge of collapse. Was it possible, the dreamer laboriously inquired the next morning, that the dream had any significance? That was one part of the tragedy of the coming years. The old men, with tired and war-weary eyes, looked out on the thing which was not, and found it still good. For the younger men,

the affair was far less simple and far less honourable. In their natural reaction from the indecencies of Mr. Lloyd George's coalition, they had been forced to look far afield for inspiration. Children of the Enlightenment, grand-children of the Reformation, they could not, with rare and striking exceptions (Jack Squire not the least) ally themselves with the main stream of Continental and Christian culture because they had never heard of it. They could only wander sheepishly to the Left, and hope they would not be brought back by over-zealous sentries watching the encroachments of the middle classes on the sacred territory of the proletarians. They need not have been afraid. The proletarians were only too anxious for a vanguard of amiable office-seekers who would provide them with a protective facade against the wrath inevitably to come. Not unnaturally either, for such men can be shot from behind as well as from the front. They can be trusted to bear the burden of the battle without surviving to reap its fruit.

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The Liberal collapse has changed the face not only of England but of Europe. Between the last Indian summer of Liberalism, when the proud words of President Wilson echoed round the world, and to-day, when the democracies of France and England stand before the world as the solitary and frightened survivors of the nineteenth century, lie a bare eighteen years. Between the first judicious and careful advances of the Liberal press towards Moscow, and to-day, when men sufficiently impudent or venal to call themselves Liberals wax openly enthusiastic over the burning of churches, the murder of priests, and the massacre of Christian statesmen and writers, lies an even shorter period of fourteen years. These portentous years coincide, as it happens, with the years of my public life, into which I retired in the summer of 1923. I have watched the process of disintegration from close quarters, and have

taken some small part in the controversies, increasingly bitter, which have attended the growing corruption of left-wing opinion, and the sure but perilously slow growth of the forces of the counter-revolution. Like the vast majority of my countrymen I have watched the process with growing distaste, but not without some pleasurable excitements, and certainly not without finding new friendships. I should like to be able to add, in the traditional English way, friendships with men of all shades of opinion, but that would not be true. Westminster remains a club, and its increasing impotence is to be traced almost wholly to that fact. Differences of policy never need divide, but differences of principles and belief should certainly do so. I can respect men who sincerely wish to destroy everything that I would give my life to preserve, but I cannot enjoy eating and drinking with them.

When I first became a publisher, the battle was barely joined. Victor Gollancz, with whom I joined forces, was still a Liberal; indeed he had only ceased, a few months before, from advising the Asquithian Liberals, then a small body under the leadership of Sir Donald Maclean in the House of Commons. Victor's final disillusionment took place, he told me, when he prepared a careful series of notes for one distinguished legislator, on a Budget debate, only to hear him, after floundering hopelessly for a quarter of an hour, wind up with an eloquent peroration calling on the Government to take immediate steps to "float the funding debt."

Our task in the world of publishing, of which we were both completely ignorant, was to turn the book department of Benn Brothers into an independent and active publishing business, and by the time I joined, the department had become a separate company under the chairmanship of Sir Ernest Benn, whose name it bore.

We worked in Bouverie Street, passing to our dingy offices through a corridor decorated with faded photographs of

deceased chairmen of gas companies, some of them with a tie and others with a collar. It was not an inspiring milieu. All the partitions were glass, there were no carpets, and very little business. There were no bells, or at any rate, none which could be heard over the roar of Gollancz's voice shrieking for orders.

Why I became a publisher I cannot imagine. At that time I had barely started to write; my Naval Division History, which was my first book, was published just as I left the Treasury and I was of no particular use to any publishing house. Now, like Hannen Swaffer, I don't read, I write. In those days I still read a little, but even that was hardly sufficient to differentiate me from the run of young men looking for jobs. Ernest Benn felt as puzzled about it as I did. To this day I remain one of his few unsolved problems. Was I really putting the bread into his mouth or merely taking it out? I could always see this legitimate but irritating inquiry in his eyes when we met, and his rather pleasant but unrevealing smile seldom reassured me. The spectacle of a young man of apparent intelligence, who was neither an artist nor a poet but still not a business man, filled him with good-natured irritation. Gollancz took a different view. I was there, as far as he was concerned, for that very reason. As far as I was concerned the same reason applied. I went into business because business was the one thing in the world about which I knew absolutely nothing. Chesterfield, disclosing to a friend in the course of conversation the fact that he had never hunted, was told that the omission was unpardonable in a man of fashion. He agreed to repair it, and he appeared to enjoy the day he spent following hounds. But when he was asked to spend another day in the same pursuit, he expressed surprise: "Does a man hunt twice?" That has always been my attitude. *Homo sum.* I find nothing alien in being in trade. I think, on the contrary, that just as a woman ought to be able to do

everything that has to be done in a house, so any one with ambitions for public life should be able to speak from practical experience of the essential activities of man. Which is to say that he should be neither a teetotaller, a bachelor, a professor or an idler. The ruling classes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were not what they were because they were rich and leisured, but because they were landowners in an age when landowning was still the greatest British industry. They were men of affairs. The objection to business men is not felt, and never has been felt, sincerely by the landed aristocracy; it is the ineradicable vice of their poor relations who have no land, and are therefore pathetically ignorant that landowning is a business. This is not to say for a moment that a landowning aristocracy is not vastly superior in integrity, if not in intelligence, to a commercial aristocracy, if only for the reason that the preservation of great estates over several generations requires character of a high order, whereas the rapid accumulation of cash in commerce necessitates character of a low order. But when we take the manufacturing aristocracy, which ruled from 1832 till the discovery of the Rand, we cannot make this easy distinction, and as the world is freed of the prevailing filth of usury, we shall return to that generous and healthy rivalry between land-owning and honest manufacture which marked the great days of the Victorian era.

Unfortunately the vital distinction between commerce and manufacture escaped me when I became a publisher; or rather, I was under the impression, which sounds so naïve to-day, that the author's business was to write books, the publisher's to publish them and the bookseller's to sell them. And that, of course, is as it should be. The terms on which a publisher does business pre-suppose this division of functions, but alas, it no longer has any basis in reality, and only those publishers who themselves are manufacturers of books or who sell direct to

the public can make a regular living with any comfort. Victor Gollancz, who has a genius for money-making, was intuitively aware of this profound truth even before it became true, and did his utmost for three years to dissuade me from experimenting with general publishing of the old-fashioned kind. Instead we manufactured art and technical books; tools of trade on which we were able to put a price bearing no relation to the cost, because, as our sales-manager used to say, "they have *got* to have it." We published the first books in the English language on automatic telephones, on synthetic rubber, on cotton cellulose, on low temperature carbonization, on hydrogenation, on cellulose esters, and on scientific agriculture according to the Rothamsted formulæ. All this in 1923-5, before the new technique of international warfare had made the search for substitutes and self-sufficiency a desperate political necessity. Gain, not glory, winged our roving flight. We combed the technical institutes and the provincial universities; we worried the research institutes of the great industrial combines, and generally kept industry two years ahead technologically of its current practice. The basis of our business was provided by Benn Brothers' famous trade papers—the *Gas World*, *The Chemical Age*, *The Cabinet Maker*, *The Fruit Grower*, and last, but not least, the famous *Electrician*, in whose sombre and somewhat ill-conditioned pages Heaviside had laid the foundation of the Electro-magnetic Theory and Fleming had forecast the miracles of wireless telegraphy. It was only by a chance that Heaviside's famous three-volume work was published. It was found, in type, when *The Electrician* was bought by Benn Brothers, and the formes were actually on their way to being broken up. Heaviside was a man of genius embittered by neglect. I fancy that for the first series of articles embodying his theory he had received less than £100 and the ridicule of most of his contemporaries. How his book was ever prepared for the press I cannot imagine. He never, in our time, answered

letters, and when the Royal Society on one memorable occasion sent a deputation to present him with an address, he refused to receive it. In 1925 or 6 he died, but his executors were at least equally difficult to deal with, and a number of his papers remain I believe, unpublished to this day. Still, his *Electromagnetic Theory* in three stout volumes at four guineas the set (we sold them out) was the glory of our list, although Oliver Lodge's *Atoms and Rays* (probably the first scientific "best seller") ran it close for honour, and E. F. Armstrong's *Chemistry in the Twentieth Century*, a symposium to celebrate the Wembley Exhibition, excelled all our technical books in popularity. It was an optimistic age. New processes were being developed in almost every industry; money was plentiful; competition was still unstifled; and above all, we had our trade papers behind us to keep our books before the industries concerned. No wonder we made money, but the odd thing about it, in contrast with almost all the rest of publishing, is that we made it usefully. The profits were small but respectable, and for me, my voyages of expedition round the science departments of universities, the research associations of great industries and sometimes even round the works of famous manufacturing concerns, set me fascinating problems in diplomacy, and even, I fear, in a measure of deceit. For I knew a little of most things, but of science absolutely nothing. Yet, though I came to learn, I had perforce to stay and preach. I had to learn my lessons quickly and quietly, and then develop a forceful insistence, having guessed the direction in which scientific research was tending in the particular field of my inquiry, and the point at which its impact on technical practice would first be felt. That was my problem. If I guessed correctly, I had a book ; if I guessed wrongly, I still, sometimes, had a book, but only rarely. The standard of disinterestedness among scientists is, and it was fortunate for me, very high indeed. That particular brand of unashamed cynicism which is charac-

teristic of professional literary men is unknown among scientists, who are content to earn, with four times the mental equipment, a third of what the average second-rate novelist considers as his right. When I use the word scientists in this connection, I exclude, of course, most of those men whom the public know as "scientists" but who are, in fact, scientific journalists. A technical publisher who went to any of these popular feature writers for advice would come away with the science of the nineties dressed up in the jargon of Fleet Street. Happily it is not on such men that our industries depend, but on men of the stamp of my old and revered friend, Henry Armstrong, doyen of English chemists, lover of poetry, master of eloquence, and ready to quarrel in a good cause with anybody in the world. I remember going, at his invitation, I fancy, to the Centenary celebrations at the Royal Institution, of Faraday's great chemical discovery. Henry Armstrong and Arthur Balfour were the chief speakers. The Grand Old Man of science and the Grand Old Man of politics—the one, bearded, massive and resonant, such a Victorian as one sees in all the groups of that much photographed period, with large leonine heads and clear, deep-set eyes, men of inflexible will and *powerful physique, simple, rugged and sincere. To see him,* and then to listen to Balfour's supple, almost feline dexterity, weaving ingenious periods out of nothing, till he had remembered (not without prompting) the name of the man to whose secure fame he was paying eloquent lip service, was, for one politically inclined, a humbling experience. So does the critical faculty make Fascists of us all. Politics have become, it would seem sometimes, a mere facade behind which the scramble of interests can be conducted more decorously. The laths which compose the facade may or may not be painted. On the whole the British public prefers them plain ; it preferred Mr. Stanley Baldwin to Lord Balfour, without a moment's hesitation.

Stanley Baldwin was in every one's mind in 1923, because he had in May made his sensational climb, over Lord Curzon's sick-bed, into office, and in December his equally sensational climb down. Then, for the last time, I appeared on the Liberal platform, first at the Queen's Hall meeting where Mr. Asquith (as he still then was) and Lord Grey launched the reunited Liberal party's election programme, and later speaking at Leicester for Mr. Winston Churchill in a brief, hectic and illuminating campaign. It was a futile election, with the Tories repeating the old mistake of Protection without the protection of Agriculture, and the Liberals clinging idiotically, in the face of a world in ruins, when not even the most highly secured bond was as good as even the most transient politician's word (and how much was that worth?), to international trade and the gold standard as remedies for all our discontents. Peace, retrenchment and no reform!

But these matters hardly concerned me. At Leicester I was on my first voyage of exploration into the promised land. It was for this, really, and not to pursue the mysteries of applied science, that I had left the Treasury ; and a chance of experiencing the realities of politics came to me as from heaven itself, in the shape of a request from Mr. Winston Churchill for an officer of the Naval Division to refute the iniquitous lies which were being told about Antwerp and the Dardanelles.

Elections had not yet, in 1923, degenerated into plebiscites. People still, all over the country, attended meetings, and at Leicester we had, I think, about seven a night and a fleet of cars took us chasing each other round from hall to hall. The nights I was there our team comprised, in addition to Winston, Archibald Sinclair, Brendan Bracken, Captain Loseby and myself, with a local chairman at each hall. We didn't, I think, all speak at each hall, though unfortunately I had to, as I was there as an expert witness. I started the evening as a Lieutenant-Commander, only half a stripe ahead

of my real rank in the R.N.V.R., but by the end of the evening I had become an Admiral. Chairmen at election meetings have an unflattering knowledge of the kind of lily that needs paint. We were working, of course, to a time schedule, and had to hold the fort at all costs till the next speaker arrived, a trying experience for a young man at his first election meetings, especially on the occasion when it was my turn to speak before Winston and to keep the audience warm for him. Luckily I succeeded, thanks to some welcome interrupters. After meetings, the fun began. We first entertained the chairmen, the agent and the other local notabilities in a committee-room at Winston's hotel, where Lord Wodehouse presided over port and, as we were Liberals in those days, lemonade. That lasted an hour or so, and for the last quarter of an hour, Winston would join us and talk a little, but with a detached gravity which belongs to earlier centuries. If any one asks me to define a demagogue I can, since Leicester, do it easily. A demagogue is everything that Mr. Winston Churchill is not. Winston and Hilaire Belloc are, in most things, curiously unlike, but they resemble each other closely in that impression of massive aloofness which they imply but never express. Grave or gay, pontifical or ribald, these are great men; different not in degree but in kind from their fellows. Indeed greatness, I have come to see, resides not in brains nor in virtue, though great men require both in some measure, but in a force of body, mind and will far above that which ordinary men have the capacity to control.

Yet success for great men is, in normal times, almost unattainable. Only in a crisis will men turn for leadership or counsel or doctrine to men who rate themselves other men's superiors. Had we indeed suffered defeat in 1917 we might have turned to Winston Churchill as our ancestors turned to Cromwell, to Marlborough, to Chatham and to Pitt, all

great and lonely men. Again, great men are seldom subtle, and subtlety is usually necessary to impress fools and confound knaves. Dr. Johnson, the greatest in popular esteem of English great men, was simple to the verge of naiveté. He would not have been a success in a democracy. Our half-educated public prefers Lytton Strachey. For success, talents above the average are needed, of course, and ambition, but principally a certain singleness of purpose and a weakness of character which can ensure the prompt seizing of every opportunity. Great men succeed in spite of their qualities; lesser men by virtue of them. Ten to one on the field!

Impossible to resist these reflections when one recalls Winston Churchill's career, and recalls at the same time—Winston Churchill. He gave me then no impression of age. It was impossible, sitting at supper and afterwards, to believe that he had charged with the Lancers at Omdurman, that he had sat in a cabinet with Lord Ripon, who had been a colleague of Palmerston's, who was Secretary at War at the time of Waterloo.

Winston had been speaking in the East End the night before I came on the scenes, and police had been necessary to protect him from the angry crowd outside the hall, so thin had the Liberal label already worn in what used to be the great stronghold of the people's party. The intensity of feeling had been, evidently, exciting: "I understood for the first time," he told us, "what it must be like to face a revolutionary mob. They howled like a pack of wolves." But that was only a diversion. The main theme of his talk was the probability, as it then appeared, of a Conservative victory owing to the split vote, giving Mr. Baldwin a majority in the House without a majority in the country. Would he force Protection on the hostile Free Trade majority? I can still see him striding up and down the room after supper declaiming against this hypothetical iniquity in periods of

classic eloquence: "If he tries, it will be an outrage, and I shall oppose him," he concluded, his period of meditation suddenly ended, "by every means in my power—by every means."

It was a revealing moment. He had seen the possibility of a great political issue—the Parliament versus the People—with all its far-reaching and dramatic possibilities. He had seen it in a flash, not logically, but intuitively, a momentary vision which inspired his purpose. It is an issue which has not yet arisen, but which will inevitably one day be a major issue here as already on the Continent. Will Winston Churchill recapture that clear moment of vision? It was characteristic of his mind and temper that the political issue—the limited tariff which the Conservatives were then recommending—came little, if at all, into his thoughts. Hence the accusations of inconsistency, accusations which are just but ridiculous. Winston Churchill knows at least one great truth, that the fate of nations is never determined by their fiscal policy. Economics must be the servant, not the master, of politics, if men are to remain free. Carry the argument a stage further and you will decide that the people must remain masters of the politicians, which means that the State must be economically dependent upon the people, and not the people on the State. That is the only secure charter of Liberty. Perhaps this truth, too, will one day be revealed by another lightning flash, and then we may see a new birth of freedom. But it will take a soldier-statesman to fight this battle, which will be long, bitter and not bloodless.

Contrasting with these high matters was the entire failure of any one at Winston's supper-table to remember, at the urgent request of the local Liberals, some of the achievements of the Liberal Governments from 1908 to 1915. Health Insurance, of course; but what was Health Insurance in 1923 but a drop in the ocean of public beneficence. Nor

were old-age pensions of five shillings a week a good platform point. Prison reform, to which Mr. Churchill had contributed not a little himself, was hardly better. At any rate it could not, we agreed, be put forward flatteringly as a personal service rendered by Mr. Churchill to his future constituents. Never before had I realised the immensity of the gulf between pre-war and post-war politics, a gulf now so well understood as to have found its way into the text-books as exemplifying the difference between the negative and the positive state. In 1918 and 1922 the elections had been fought on personal issues, a vote of confidence in the man who had won the war and a vote of no-confidence in the man who had lost the peace. This was, we had imagined, a pre-war election, another case of "getting back." And now I saw the politicians finding the same insuperable obstacle to that process which we humbler people in the Treasury had found. None of the old slogans fitted. None of the once-popular achievements was worth as much as one vote.

Pondering this, I returned to Fleet Street. The election had been only an interlude for me, as was, for all of us, the middle-class Labour Government which followed it. I had left the public service to learn a trade, and had to do it thoroughly before I could do more than think of politics. I had not only to learn, but to teach, for Gollancz, as clever at handling figures as Mr. Neville Chamberlain himself, was less daring in other directions. Instead he clung obstinately to his art books, so called, which were certainly a gold mine as long as the market lasted. But the market was showing signs of exhaustion.

The essential thing about an art book is that it shall have nothing to do with art. It is either a tool of trade for the collector and dealer or it is just nothing at all, from the sales point of view. The authors of successful art books are provided by the Government in the persons of the officials of the

Museums. The illustrations also come largely from the Museums. The skill of the publisher is shown in the collection of his mailing list and the quality of his reproductions, which must be beautiful in themselves and at the same time bear some resemblance to the originals. To make a really beautiful colour plate out of a piece of porcelain, lacquer or jade is not too easy, unless you know the trick. Gollancz did. He employed a miniaturist to paint each object in the appropriate light against the appropriate background. The rest was easy and the result spectacular. How many unsold copies of these masterpieces of book production remain in the United States, in France and Germany and in the cellars of the London booksellers I cannot, of course, say, but for two or three years the trade must have made as much money out of them as we did, since their appetite was insatiable. Every period of Chinese ceramic art, and indeed of every other precious object which had a collectors' value—silver, glass, jade, Chelsea porcelain, old furniture, Chinese lacquer and Japanese prints, all were grist to our mill. The names of the collectors of all these things are known to the museums and the dealers. They are relatively few in number and very wealthy. As a class, they like books to look at rather than to read, and expensive books rather than cheap books. That suited us. After all, the same illustrations could be used again, after an appropriate interval, to form an "Encyclopædia" or, as it would now be called, an "Omnibus," in which the vulgar herd could get two or three times the number of illustrations at half or a third of the price of one of our superb vintage products.

It was all Greek to me. I had never known any one who collected anything more expensive than cigarette cards. I should certainly have fallen at once into the one fatal error in this kind of publishing. I should have assumed in the buyers of the books some literary culture and some love of

beauty for its own sake. I should therefore have been tempted to reproduce real works of art, real paintings, real sculpture, or books with some historical purpose behind them, illustrating the culture of an epoch, a race or a religion. I put up these infantile suggestions to Gollancz early in our association, and I can still see the look of horrified despair on his face, and hear the howl of anguish which passed his lips. To say that it passed his lips is indeed a grotesque understatement, for it echoed round the office. I inferred without waiting to be told that the proposal had not got what another of our colleagues called "a good commercial smell about it."

The only art book, if it could be so called, for which I incurred any responsibility was a monumental work on dogs by Mr. Edward Ash, that well-known and enthusiastic authority. The book came to me through a chance call of the author's at the office as the result of which I in due course received one of Gollancz's famous Napoleonic notes beginning, "I have to-day commissioned the most important work on dogs which has ever appeared." As a great privilege I was to be allowed to "produce" it. The months passed by, and "the most important work" grew more and more so, in its author's eyes, as its length expanded, but less and less so in Gollancz's eyes, as the bills mounted up. When the final reckoning came it was found that the book, although acclaimed as a notable success, had actually made very little money for the publishers. By then "the most important work which has ever appeared" had become, in Gollancz's office memoranda, "your book on dogs," and I was the culprit. Gollancz, however, was well repaid by fate for his spiritual desertion of his erstwhile distinguished author, for Mr. Ash, it appeared, was a regular concert goer, and Gollancz was always meeting him. Having an uneasy conscience, he felt compelled to conversation, and they had at least a dozen talks on dogs and their habits in the foyer of Covent Garden and

at Queen's Hall. And each time Gollancz reported the meeting with a grimmer face. "There's something wrong with that fellow," he said finally. "I simply can't understand it. He doesn't even seem interested in dogs."

For the author of "the most important work on dogs which has ever appeared" it certainly sounded odd, but I thought no more of the matter till one day, at the height of the Covent Garden Opera season, Gollancz came into my room laughing uncontrollably. "The mystery is solved," he said. "It isn't Ash."

"What on earth do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, it just isn't. He was quite rude to me last night. He told me that he couldn't imagine why I always rushed up to him and started a conversation about dogs, which he detests, as he's a cat fan, that he does not write, and that, finally, his name is not Ash."

It was indeed poetic justice. The idea of Victor leaving his wife and his friends time and again, perhaps even foregoing a drink, in order to make laborious conversation about dogs with a complete stranger, still makes me laugh almost as much as it made him. Anyway, it made a happy ending to the Ash saga. I have often wondered whether the real Ash has himself ever seen his double.

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From dogs we passed, though only slowly, to human beings. It was a long, if not according to the protagonists of the ant state, an upward climb, and the dubious results of our canine adventure did not make it any easier. General publishing was a speculation, and Gollancz was not inclined to speculate. Had things been as they are to-day, I doubt very much whether the first great publishing sensation of the post-war years—the rise of Ernest Benn, Ltd., in seven years from a small department doing a turnover of £2000 a year to a general publishing house with a turnover of a quarter of a million—

would ever have taken place. But in 1924 there was still a leisured class which was also lettered. The home is the cultural unit, and there were still, in 1924, thousands of homes which had attained the leisured state before the war. Most people stop serious reading at twenty-five and don't start again until they are fifty. The intervening years, given by men to active work and by women to bringing up their families, are the years which the circulating libraries eat. They are, perhaps, none the worse for that, but they are years of output, not of intake; years of action, not of reflection; and for this reason no good to a publisher, unless he be a publisher of anodynes. But in how many homes to-day is reading the staple occupation of evenings and week-ends. Broadly speaking, I would say only in those homes which entered on their period of relative leisure not much later than 1923. The rest have acquired post-war habits and the taste for post-war luxuries, which are speed, not rest; excitement, not reflection; and, even for the naturally reflective minority, looking and listening rather than thinking.

Nothing will ever affect the very great books or the very great writers. They will make infinitely less to-day than at any previous time, if we except the middle of the seventeenth century and the last third of the eighteenth century. But if you set out to become a general publisher, you cannot gamble on publishing great books or discovering great authors in the first four years. You must be able to rely on a sale for books which are merely good books, for works of scholarship or criticism which are valuable because they are conscientious studies of important people or events or ideas, or records of things seen and experienced by cultivated minds. How dull it all sounds now! The blunt answer is that these books are dull, to our modern taste.

Middle-class culture has never been an adventure of the mind or soul. It was, even at its best, a little asphyxiating.

It suggests men in top hats and women in trailing skirts with large muffs going round picture galleries, or even, in foreign countries, round the museums; in the provinces, they broke out into Browning and Dante societies. The whole point about it was that it was self-conscious, not spontaneous; a duty, not a pleasure. Like going to church. But it provided a background for genius and a living for men of letters. "Have you published anything interesting lately?" I was asked over the bridge table the other evening. For once I was able to say that I had, and foolishly began to tell my listener about Herbert Agar's *What is America?* After a minute or two I was charmingly but very firmly interrupted. "But that sounds like a *good* book." I said that it certainly was. "Then I'm afraid it wouldn't be any use to me," said my neighbour. Such a remark would be praised by the moderns for its frankness, and I admit at once that in other days there was a certain amount of humbug about reading. But the theologians, who understand human nature much better than the neo-moralists, have always insisted that there is a certain dividend of virtue *ex opere operato*. The habit of dipping into good books, if only for show, did, in a good proportion of cases, develop a taste for good reading. More important still, it made the publishing of good books a commercial possibility.

It is so no longer to-day. Gollancz and I caught the last train, so to speak. I began our general publishing with H. A. L. Fisher's *Modern World* series, a series of books on *Political Thought* edited by Harold Laski and a series of biographies judiciously chosen and edited by Philip Guedalla, under the title *Curiosities of Politics*. We had, as always in series of this kind, our big sellers—Gooch's *Germany*; Dean Inge's *England* (which had a spectacular success); St. John Ervine's *Parnell*; Philip Guedalla's monumental *Palmerston*; Shane Leslie's *George IV.*—but to-day the profits on these

five books would hardly cover the losses we should have made on the rest. The condition of serious publishing is that your good solid unspectacular books should sell from 1200 to 1500 copies, because and not in spite of the fact that they are good books, by being talked about, not by being expensively advertised. That condition still, if only barely, obtained in 1924. But it was Gollancz himself who was to hasten its disappearance.

I did not think then, and I am quite sure now, that Gollancz viewed our departure from the safe ground of art and technological publishing with any enthusiasm. The Jewish mentality is profoundly different from our own. It is essentially dictatorial, not liberal. Gollancz saw himself as the conductor of an orchestra, determining the tune and the tempo. When a book he did not like made money, he had a feeling of resentment. Even where he liked a book, he was indifferent to its success if he had not himself planned it. Only one venture in which Gollancz and I were equally interested was a definite success—that was Benn's Sixpenny Library. Its success was only limited by the fact that, bearing Ernest Benn's name, it could not be turned into propaganda. There is only a limited market for disinterested knowledge. The buyer of popular guides to wisdom is usually only anxious to get clever quickly. We had hoped to find a market for our Sixpenny Library among the clientele of the Workers' Educational Association and such bodies, but it was a vain dream. Their clientele wanted only those arguments and facts which supported Socialist conclusions. In the Sixpenny Library we interred, without even a public funeral, some of the best short surveys of knowledge published in our time. Nobody wanted them. We sold twenty or thirty thousand of the first dozen titles, but the rest rapidly succumbed to the fate of all similar series. They formed disconsolate and increasingly dusty stocks in booksellers' shops

and were buried under their own weight, one of my books (and, in my judgment, my best) among them.

The press are as much to blame as the public for the failure of these cheap series. No reviewer will ever write even half a column about a sixpenny book. They are treated in batches, and since every batch contains books on a wide assortment of subjects, they can never be expertly reviewed, nor is the review, on account of its diverse interest, likely to be read. These books should, of course, have been published one at a time, not in sixes or dozens. But that, alas, was impossible, and for a reason which goes to the root of the matter. There is a potential demand for good books which cannot become effective until the price becomes very cheap, but the extent of that ordinarily ineffective demand is small. If 1000 people will buy a book at 7/6 (by which I, or any other publisher, mean buy it within two months of publication); 1200, not 1500, will buy it at 5/-, and possibly 2000 at 2/6. But reduce the price to 6*d.* and you will not automatically increase the demand to 15,000, or anything like it. It will be easily understood, however, that, since many factors in the cost of a book are constant, the rate of increase in the demand for the book ought to be far greater and not far less than the rate of decrease in the selling price, in order to make both ends meet. Sixpenny books in these circumstances only become useful articles of commerce when they can be sold, handled and invoiced in huge quantities. Yet the trade cannot, in the long run, absorb huge quantities except of fiction.

Our most spectacular successes came to us, contrary to general belief, through Ernest Benn himself. These were *The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, and *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*. The first was the most famous book we ever published, and in some ways the best. I cannot say the same of Colonel House's *magnum opus*. It began, alas, the inevitable stream of post-war recollections of the nearly great men who moved so

busily behind the scenes and collected the scandal and gossip of those four historic years. These books poured out in exactly the same way after the Napoleonic Wars ; indeed, the last and most important of all of the Napoleonic books, the *Caulaincourt Memoirs*, only appeared two years ago. What was new about Colonel House's book was the technique employed in selling it.

Oddly enough, our once-famous double-column advertising began with an amateurish effort of my own. Gollancz was more than indignant, but my unappreciated effort made book advertising history. And in this fashion. One week when Gollancz was abroad Germany came suddenly into the news —I believe it was through Hindenburg's election to the Presidency. Gooch's book had just been published and I realised that now if ever was the chance to sell it. Everybody for a few days was talking Germany. I sent for *The Observer* type book in order to find the largest and most sensational type which would get the word "Germany" across a column, but failed to find anything that hit the eye. So I took a double column, and in those days of single-column advertising the word

G E R M A N Y

spaced across two columns in large black type stood out like a sky sign. What was equally to be expected, we started at once to sell the book. In every other respect my advertisement was rigidly conventional. I claim no credit at all for the subsequent development of the new advertising technique which Gollancz from that day started to work out, and which was, inadvertently at first, deliberately later on, to revolutionise publishing, and complete the discomfiture of old-fashioned scholarship and taste.

The new idea was a simple one. It was to tell the public what they ought to read instead of merely telling them what you had published. It is the same technique that lies behind the advertising of most proprietary articles: "Every well-dressed man wears such-and-such collars." It has been carried to the greatest length by the cigarette companies. Kensitas were sold through the suggestion implied by the odious Jenkyn that in houses where there were butlers as corrupt and senile as Jenkyn, in the houses, that is, of the very, very rich, Kensitas were the cigarettes smoked. The De Reszke manufacturers had an equally odious young man in what is called in suburbia "faultless evening dress" and wearing a most obtrusive decoration. Impression, rich and successful snobs smoke De Reszkes.

Now the application of this method to books is not at all easy. It was no good at that stage shouting, as Ernest Benn wanted to do, "Buy Benn books." To create an imprint value you have to revolutionise the whole technique of publishing, and become identified in the public mind not with books of a certain quality but with books of a certain tendency. That may be the ultimate result of the forces now at work, but even to-day we are some way from that. Gollancz had to look elsewhere for his categorical imperative. He found it in the sabotaging of public taste by a barrage of uncritical opinions. The beginning was loud, strong and spontaneous. We sold the *Intimate Papers of Colonel House* on their intimacy: "Do you know what was said at Downing Street on August 17, 1916?" There is a public which must know things of that kind, and we got it. Then came the reviews. We did not just quote them and leave the public to judge. We so extracted and arranged them as to create the suggestion that no one could afford not to read this book if he wished to be thought intelligent and well-informed.

The effect of this new technique brilliantly displayed over

our new double-column spaces was electrical. And it was, I frankly confess, a fascinating game. We soon abandoned the old-fashioned idea of giving a book its proper title or the author the courtesy of initials. "House," "Bell" and "Clissold" (for H. G. Wells's *The World of William Clissold*) were effectively menacing abbreviations. Once, if I remember rightly, we printed our advertisement upside down. We then began the stress of expectancy. "Be careful," we suggested; "on Friday the most important book of the century is coming out. You will look a fool at dinner if you haven't got a copy and read at least the first few pages."

The whole virtue of the new technique, from the selling end, was that it shifted the appeal from the book as food for the mind to the book as an elementary social necessity to people who wished to be considered well informed. But it was the big type that made it possible; the novelty and the noise. When the novelty wore off, and the noise was only a small part of a deafening chorus, something else was needed. And that something else, to be blunt, was not art but commerce.

I use the word in no invidious sense. The reviewing racket is a perfectly honest racket, but it is still a racket. And this is how it began. It began with the realisation by my very astute and enterprising partner that our sensational series of successes was too good to last. We could not go on getting such books as we were selling simultaneously at that time; the House Papers, Gertrude Bell's Letters, Inge's *England*, Guedalla's *Palmerston* and Wells's *World of William Clissold*. As far as Gollancz was concerned, he couldn't get any of them again, for none of them had come through him. No man alive could have published them as brilliantly as he did, but the new advertising technique was like Haig's tanks on the Somme. It had achieved a surprise but could not be relied upon to do so again. A new strategy was required to take advantage of the new tactics. Gollancz saw this at once. What

you must do was to start your train of thought not with the authors but with the reviewers. Probably this great revelation was inspired by the kindly fate of our art books, which were invariably reviewed by one of our other authors, Hobson by Rackham, Rackham by Read, Read by Hobson, and so on. This was accidental and to a certain extent inevitable with these specialist books. But the lesson was none the less valuable. Choose books which the reviewer will like and make sure of it by asking the reviewer first. And then get your other authors to write appreciations of them. The suggestion of corruption is absurd. The late Gerald Gould, who was appointed our reader in 1926, was one of the most conscientious of men. But, precisely for that reason, if he recommended a book to us in his capacity of reader, he was bound to review it well. Such were the small beginnings, but no one, not even Gollancz, could have foreseen the astonishing results which were to follow. For the opinions we quoted about our books advertised those who gave them as much as those whose books were praised. The almost immediate result was that editors, seeing wise and provident pronouncements about best-sellers from men with a talent for writing and with well-known names, said: "There is a man who should be reviewing for *me*." The result was that in a few years the unsigned review had disappeared; the critic was out of a job; and on Sunday morning you could hardly hear yourself speak for the noise of the popular novelists and biographers calling to each other across the great open spaces of *The Observer* and the *Sunday Times*.

We were happily a long way from that absurdity in 1925. W. L. Courtney, for instance, was still reviewing in the *Telegraph* and Edmund Gosse in the *Sunday Times*. A recommendation by either of these two famous critics sold a book; I remember one review of Susan Glaspell's first novel by Courtney which actually sold a thousand copies in a week. Such a thing is impossible to-day. There are no critics in whom

the public have any more confidence. They trust, if at all, to the different Book Societies, and the selections of individual newspapers, and on the whole they are wise. For within their limits these choices are good, and they are scrupulously fair. But the same vice pervades them as pervades the publishers' catalogues under the new dispensation. The Book Society are frankly booksellers, and the great national newspapers cannot afford to puzzle their readers. They must all choose books which have, at the prevailing level of public taste, a potentially large sale. But no body of selectors can say so freely. And so the public gets what it likes and is told by eminent men that they like the best.

People laugh at the plethora of novels of "genius," "power" and "stark realism" which are reported by the critics. What I have said will explain the mystery. These novels have been chosen, consciously or unconsciously, because they are precisely the ones which these critics will regard as works of genius. The critics, the authors, the publishers and the readers are, in fact, the same people, not merely spiritually but in the flesh, and instead of taking the bread out of each other's mouths they are putting it in.

All this has facilitated a process of commercialisation and standardisation. You can advertise largely if you are sure in advance of good reviews by popular critics. You cannot pay a newspaper four guineas the double column inch for space if you know that three-quarters of the readers of the book pages will be put off by hostile or lukewarm reviews of your books. You must be sure that the potential demand is adequate. Once you set out to sell books by national advertising the books you sell must be as popular, over the field of the potential demand, as any other goods offered for sale in the advertising columns of the national newspapers. And once you start selling this kind of book you can sell no other kind. In the first place, the economics of your manufacturing and

selling organisation ; secondly, the quality of the criticism ; and thirdly, the public taste, will prevent it. Only a generation of great, independent and ruthless literary editors can undo the harm that has been done. But they will have to be properly paid. The great newspaper proprietors and editors have a great opportunity and a great responsibility. It is not the publisher or the reviewer who is really to blame for the literary racket, but the editor, and, in much larger measure, the newspaper proprietor. The literary editor of a great newspaper must be a man of wide learning, of great experience in the commerce of letters, a critic of intellectual force and a great administrator. His position is more responsible by far than that of the Head of an Oxford College or even of a great public school. His task should be to create an educated democracy, not to pander to the taste of the half-educated and thus stereotype and standardise it. The literary editor has the fate of the commercial publisher in his hand, for reviews are an indispensable element in sales promotion.

There are, of course, some good books which even the reviewers of to-day will treat kindly, because their subject gives them a peg for an interesting article. We call these "reviewers' books" in our jargon, and shun them like the plague. Such, above all, are books about books, gossip about dead ideas, pot-pourris of old causes and old characters. These things have survived from the lettered past and reviewers with good hearts and the remains of a conscience pounce on them avidly. All honour to them. But they cannot sell these books, for the get-clever-quick public has been taught to have no use for them. They neither flatter nor deceive. They do not remove a single stone from the crumbling foundations of our society; they lift no veils; they explore no avenues. And what is the use, asks the modern mind, of living in a glass house if you throw no stones?

This is not an age when the great commonplaces ring

true. John Morley, greatest master of these in our time, speaks nothing to my contemporaries, who value what they call "intelligence" above honour, dignity, patriotism and fidelity. And such "intelligence!" Joseph Conrad speaks somewhere of the vulgar refinement of modern thought which cannot understand the august simplicity of patriotism, a sentiment inherent in the nature of men and things. To see things as they are, it is necessary to see them as they may be. The story of man may be the story of the Fall, but his history is the history of his Redemption—the story not of what has happened, but of what has mattered.

The ruin born of faithlessness is deeper in Protestant England than in Catholic Europe, for England held to the faith of the Reformation, and that is a faith which once lost is harder to recapture. It is not the belief in God but the belief in man which has been shattered; and it is amid the ruins, not of Christianity but of humanitarianism that we English live to-day.

The deepness of the tragedy lies in its inevitability. The old political parties reflected the profound dualism of Christian civilisation, itself the reflection of the facts of man's divinity and man's mortality. "Man must be free," cried the devout Liberal. "Man must serve," cried the devout Conservative. Fools dreamt of a Utopian anarchy and knaves of an hierarchic tyranny, but there were Christian men in each fold: if there was not one flock there was one Shepherd. When this faith failed, it was the best, not the worst, minds who felt bound to point the moral out of the depths of an inverted puritan conscience—Aldous Huxley a case in point. It was only a short step from the self-righteousness which made God in its own image to the self-hate which denied God, because there was no dignity in man. This transition, given the loss of faith, was tragic but inevitable. The vile public consequences of this new apostasy were not, however, inevitable: they sprang from

the possibilities of the new science of literary racketeering and the contemptible equivocations of a few men. The doctrine of natural wisdom and natural virtue died a natural death at the hands of scientists and historians. But the hold of these doctrines on ordinary people remained to be exploited, and it has, for the last four years, been exploited with cynical determination. It is the people who find life meaningless and men worthless who have exploited the pacifist sentiment. It is the people whose declared object is the destruction of political liberty who have invoked the principles of liberty to sabotage the institutions which preserve it. It is the people who proclaim that morality is merely the statistical average of conduct who have waged war in the name of morality against the social system which they wish to destroy. And why? To set up in its place not a new freedom but an old tyranny which is to end, according to its latest apostle, Mr. Langdon Davies, in a depopulated world of intellectuals maintaining themselves in comfort and ease by the simple principle of refusing to allow the earth to be encumbered by their fellow-men.

Mr. Langdon Davies is not one of the deceivers; he has made his choice. He has repudiated the catchwords and the flattering impertinences with which his allies have tried to climb into power. But it is not he but they who have succeeded in dominating our literature and controlling our literary press. It is they who were the creators and inspirers of the lie about the War, which I killed; of the frank and fearless novel of dirt and despair; of the new history where the story of civilisation is the tail at the end of the monkey; of the new morality, which was only the old immorality; of the new peace, which is war to the death.

And all the time their battle has been fought against odds. The corrupters of opinion are not a majority except in the press and on the platform. That is the astonishing fact. The responsibility for their success, still in the balance, will lie,

if they succeed, as much if not more with what Mr. Wyndham Lewis calls the "great soft centre" as with the hard core of the revolutionary racketeers. As for the balance of argument, the matter is not in doubt. On the political Left, if we exclude the great Victorians, and it is more than doubtful where they stand to-day, how many men are there of first-class intellectual ability?

The weapons of this treason of the clerks, which is also a tyranny, have been mechanical rather than intellectual; commercial rather than spiritual. They have fought, as clever men always do, on the ground best suited to their talents, and they are clever enough to know, what their public does not, that the intellectual tide is against them. But they sell their books.

CHAPTER TEN

SOME EDITORS AND SOME AUTHORS

THE first editor I ever met was J. L. Garvin; the second, Owen Seaman (in the squash court of Philip Agnew's delightful house at Weedon); the third, H. W. Massingham, and the fourth, J. A. Spender. The four papers which they edited are, I believe, the only four London papers of repute for which I have never written a line. I have often wondered why I never attempted to invade at least the sacred columns of *Punch*, since there is a family connection there going back to the foundation of the paper. Indeed, the signatures of both my great-grandfathers on my father's side are on the famous Punch Round Table. Moreover, I used, in my undergraduate days, to write things that were supposed to be funny.

Cynics may say that explains everything. It was Gilbert who laid the trap for Burnand when he remarked casually that he supposed *Punch* got crowds of jokes sent in every week. Burnand assenting, Gilbert asked why he never put any of them in. There was, I suppose, some virtue in the jibe. *Punch* makes one smile, but seldom makes one laugh. Delia and Cynthia, illustrated or otherwise by Mr. Lewis Baumer, chatter capriciously through Mr. Punch's Armour-plated pages, but even the meretricious naughtiness of nymph-errantry is denied them, while the humours of Doll Tearsheet, Mistress Quickly and Juliet's Nurse find no echo in the text, not even beneath Mr. George Belcher's more promising drawings. *Punch* humour—a poor man unable to take a taxi on a wet day, or, at best, a rich man taking a toss out hunting because, although rich, he is not to the manner born—is humour according to

the prescription of Hobbes; "a flash of glory arising from a transient sense of superiority." To keep up that sense of superiority among those income-tax payers who still believe that they are members of the governing class is the chief social function of *Punch*. Little gets passed which might disillusion these heroes. With the exception of A. P. H., the wittiest writers of to-day—Evelyn Waugh, J. B. Morton, Bevan Wyndham Lewis, Hugh Kingsmill and R. A. Knox, do not contribute to *Punch* and its cartoonists have not for years been less than polite. *Punch* remains the best of English papers because it achieves so well what it sets out to achieve—suburbia *in excelsis*; the ridiculous made sublime. Some day I may write, because I have promised, a new series of Mrs. Caudle's Lectures, and then I shall have cause to be grateful that "mild and bitter" is still the vintage that is required by my friend E. V. Knox, whose reign, just beginning, promises to be even more gentle than that of Owen Seaman.

Punch belongs to the ages; Massingham's *Nation* belonged to the Edwardian epoch. It was grave and gallant and hostile and doomed; a cavalier fighting for the Parliament. All its contributors except J. H. Whitehouse were soldiers of fortune —Nevinson, Brailsford, Tomlinson, Masterman, H. C. O'Neill and the editor himself must have made up the most combatative sextet in Fleet Street, and the most charming. But if there was an ounce of political judgment among the sextet, it was buried beneath O'Neill's reticent suavity. Yet Massingham was a great editor. He got every man writing at white heat on subjects of urgent importance for nothing at all. Massingham had few beliefs. His temperament was nearer to that of Swift than to that of Mr. Gladstone. With Asquith, his idol of clay whom he roasted at the *Nation* lunches every Tuesday at the fire of his indignant eloquence, till in the process the idol became once more a god, he had nothing in common, except integrity, and even Massingham's integrity was of a different

order, fervent, dogmatic and impatient. Asquith was cool to the point of detachment; logical to the point of cynicism; patient to the point of indifference.

Massingham was a Tory *manqué*. He was such a Tory as we want to-day to unmask the slim manœuvre of the sentimental radicals who have captured the Tory machine and threaten the liberties of free men not with destruction but with asphyxiation. Nevinson was another Tory *manqué*, and Tomlinson most certainly of all. The fact that its editor was fighting on the wrong side, led to the death of the *Nation*, to the great loss of English journalism. It died of being more consistently and hopelessly wrong than any other paper in the world. Its heart was at deadly variance with its head, and it was the heart that was as sound as a bell. Yet the head was strong. In 1917 and 18, when I went sometimes to the monthly *Nation* lunches, official Liberalism, though no longer an intellectual force, was powerfully equipped. There was not a line of the old *Nation* that was not well written, fine nervous English and taut. If I had had more than two regular contributors to the *English Review* who could write as all Massingham's staff wrote I should have been proud.

The tragedy of the *Nation* was that it was written by nineteenth-century Liberals who believed in freedom and who had lived on into an age when the chief enemies of freedom were the capitalist system born of Free Trade and the political machines born of unrestricted Parliamentary democracy. These two things were the creation of the Liberalism of Gladstone, and Liberals have been trying ever since to escape or to swallow their consequences. I shall never forget walking up Whitehall with Henry Nevinson after one of the lunches, and suddenly he stopped and looked up at the towering Government offices around us. "This is what I hate," he said passionately. "Clerks and clerking: the vices of the age." Yet he was a Liberal, and calls himself a Socialist to-day. It was the

same with all of them. The ironical fact was that they had so little faith, not so much. When Belloc and Chesterton cried, "Back; there is still time," they stood still and exclaimed bitterly that it was too late. Yet if their great democratic state could in fact do half of what they pretended to believe, it could certainly have led us back, as far as any one wanted to go. After all, the end of the seventeenth century is on any reckoning nearer than the millennium.

Massingham dominated his contributors not by intellectual but by technical superiority. He was the greatest journalist of his age. He knew how to build his paper; to give it a unity week by week; to hit the nails which his public wished him to hit with the weapons best suited to the task. I have often been asked what is the secret of editing, but I confess myself unable to give a plain answer. It is a branch of connoisseurship, in a sense. A great editor knows instinctively, a good editor must learn painfully, the difference not between good and bad journalism (which is known to every sub-editor), but between real thinking and journalism, however good. Real thinking means, of course, thinking things out, not thinking them over; thinking things, not thinking about things. If you can make this distinction correctly, you will find yourself very soon with a team of potential contributors. You will then almost certainly have to teach them to write for your public, in the idioms to which your public is accustomed. Catholic writers, for instance, tend always to assume what, writing for a Protestant public, they have to prove. Politicians invariably beg the big question, which is the appositeness of the accepted political remedies. If they are good—by which I mean successful—politicians, they are seldom of any use at all as contributors to a journal of opinion, which is concerned always with the question of why and whither, whereas politicians are concerned only with the question of how.

People who forget this do not understand why the great

Press Lords have no political influence. It is because they do not educate their public on fundamentals, but only try to influence their views on practical questions as they arise. Tax wheat; hats off to France; hands off Germany; no European entanglements; save the League. To all their shouting their public remains irresponsive, because they are not moved by any conviction as to the kind of world they want to build. The Press Lords can therefore only appeal to self-interest, and self-interest divides. The difficulty of the Press Lords lies, of course, in this: they want readers who think occasionally, but not readers who think habitually; if they had a real thinking public their advertisements would cease to "pull" and their revenues would go down. "No newspaper house is going to back you," said Lord Riddell to Francis Yeats Brown when he was trying to save *Everyman* from political suffocation. "Advertisers don't like papers with views."

But are advertisers wise? The views of people who have no views must issue in a policy just as inevitably as the views of people who have views. Non-intervention is just as much a policy as intervention on either side, and secularism just as "controversial" a point of view as Christianity or Buddhism. The only difference which the advertisers will find, in the long run, is that the policies born of the refusal to think are less successful than those which are born of hard thinking, while they lack the merit of even trying to take us anywhere we want to reach. Will the policy of taking all the kicks without even having a shot at the halfpence be in the long run conducive to that placid receptivity which national advertisers desire? May not the time come when even the readers of "national" advertisements have had enough?

In any case, these readers are no use to the advertisers after they are dead. Only the other day I wrote to Lord Beaverbrook, who alone of our Press magnates really understands

that the Government's foreign policy (late 1936 version) means war, inevitably, inexcusably, very soon, and against odds, to suggest that his two million readers would never back his isolation policy unless they were told week by week what was really happening abroad, and how we were influencing these happenings for ill—towards war and away from the receding vision of peace. Lord Beaverbrook wrote me, as he does to every one, a charming letter, but the editor informed me curtly that the *Daily Express* had no space for such a feature as I suggested. No space! The issue, on Lord Beaverbrook's own premisses, is one of life and death for the whole of Europe. No space? These are the mathematics of Bedlam.

These reminiscences of authors and proprietors for whom I have never written are a deliberate irrelevance. People imagine that if you know an editor you have an assured source of income from his columns. I have only written regularly for three editors and had never met any of them before I began to write for them. Friends are never ideal contributors, though contributors, I am glad to say, may well become ideal friends. In time. But editors need a lot of the distance which lends enchantment, and they need it for a long time. They should be heard and seldom seen. Jack Squire used to hold that an editor should read everything that was sent in to his paper, but I hold that to be a fatal if generous mistake. The paper, not the contributor, should occupy the editor's mind.

That was what Gilbert Frankau forgot. Hence the tragi-comedy of *Britannia*. Frankau imagined that the people who mattered on the paper were the contributors—an extraordinary obsession. He went round London collecting them at immense salaries and told them to write. And write they did. The over-matter for the first issue of *Britannia* would have filled the *Tatler* for a year. I shall never forget the first time I went into the *Britannia* offices on the top floor of the old *Morning Post* building in Aldwych. Everything was very modern, and

the vile open office system was installed. At the far end, in the dome, sat Gilbert Frankau in solitary state, with traffic lights—red, green and yellow—outside his door. He was, it appeared, business manager, advertisement manager, circulation manager, publicity manager, everything in the world except the editor. The only other people who had rooms to themselves, as far as I could find out, were Julia Cairns and Crawford Price. Julia Cairns did the women's pages, and did them very well; Crawford Price was measuring himself for Gilbert's shoes, but he had no other visible occupation except to be the man in front of Frankau (to the staff) and the man behind Frankau (to Frankau's colleagues on the Board).

The whole editorial work of the paper was done by Frederick Heath, now a publisher, then still a journalist. Nominally he was sub-editor, but as there was no editor his task was herculean, and since he was not Hercules, it was impossible.

The idea behind *Britannia* was Frankau's, and a good one—an illustrated news review with intelligent comments and sound anti-Socialist principles. It would have been called to-day, as Yeats Brown's *Everyman* actually was called, Fascist, but then any one seen going near a church is a Fascist to-day, unless, of course, he is going there quite innocently, in order to burn it. There was however, no sinister political motif behind Frankau's conception. Frankau is a romantic in letters, as well as in life, but being not merely a romantic but a Jewish romantic, he sees the English scene in simple contrasting colours, neat as well as gaudy. But Frankau is modern as well as romantic. Where Philip Guedalla, also seeking escape from our cold western world, hears the thunder of the guns (across the seas) and the music of the violins in the ballroom (upstairs), Frankau finds his escape in the vision of men in khaki and men in hunting pink. He has an uneasy feeling that his heroes are possibly more at ease in short black coats and extremely striped trousers, but for that simple and

sufficient reason he resents the attempts of socialistic fools and tax-collecting knaves to cut off the supply of romantic English sportsmen at the source. Guedalla, being a radical from Rugby, turns his luxuriant emotion to the construction of period pieces. Frankau, as a new Tory from Eton, invests the contemporary scene with romance. But romance with a difference. Love, sport and commerce are not lost causes, but the practical business of life. It is life that is romantic to-day. Never mind what it used to be. It won't run away with you, if you can keep your head.

"If you can keep your head, while all about you . . ."

Yes, Gilbert Frankau is really a piece of Kipling's Englishman. I only once met the whole of him, in the person of a South African rugger international who insisted on reciting the whole of *If* to Yeats Brown and myself at five a.m. in the bar of the *Champlain*, when we were coming back from America. But if Gilbert himself would have been incapable of that alarming performance, one of his heroes well might, and *Britannia* was to be his heroes' weekly fare and sole source of inspiration. It was, I repeat, a good idea. After all, there is nothing to be ashamed of in being big, clean, wholesome and British, and there is nothing inherently wrong with the conception of a national weekly. We only aimed at a hundred thousand circulation, an easy possibility with the money at our disposal. But not with those contributors! Where they came from was a puzzle to me. A glance round the offices revealed a fantastic amalgamation of all the studio parties one had ever fled from in the Chelsea that was still poor but not so particularly young, in the years immediately after the war. By 1928 they were even less young, but no longer poor, and writing for dear life, A few retained their sense of humour, but most of them. like the veteran who disinterred from the days of Albert the Good a feature called *Fur, Fin and Feather*, and "sold" it as

new to the powers that be, were in deadly earnest. I can still hear him explaining, with passionate and sorrowful emphasis, why his "copy" for the first number was 500 words over length: "But we *must* have something about otter-hunting!"

That really summed-up *Britannia*. We had to have something about everything. We had to be, and say, just nothing. The whole paper was, when it came out, about something else. Just words. And the real tragedy was that beneath the magnificent dome, cut off by his barrage of red lights, without even a Belisha beacon to enable a contributor to make a dash for it once in a while, was the one real journalist who could have made that paper alive. But, with the playboy instinct which is the charm and the nemesis of his race, he chose instead to be a Napoleon of commerce for those fatal six weeks which make or mar a new paper. The result was nothing less appalling than our brave new world in miniature, chaos swiftly broadening out from conference to conference, as a result of which there were no machines, no paper, no advertisements and no circulation. There was nothing but contributors, scattered all over a vast room large enough to house the entire editorial staff of the *Times* and, in the dim distance, Napoleon wrestling with recalcitrant contractors. And outside the public walked up and down quite as unconscious then as to-day of the great task on which Napoleon was embarked. How could they be conscious of us, who were totally unconscious of them. We had bought a megaphone, but we had nothing to shout about.

The chairman of the company was the enigmatic Mr. William Harrison, then at the height of his brief hour of fame. Harrison was, he told me, a Liberal—had he not bought the *Daily Chronicle* from Lord Reading (an act of faith, if ever there was one)—but he wanted a business government. He felt that if only his methods were more generally known and utilised the wheels of world trade would begin to revolve.

Narrowing down this thesis by a respectful question or two, I gathered that it was all a matter of the duty on wrapping paper, "and, would you believe it, they can't see it?" "No, Mr. Jerrold, they can't see it. But you can. . . ." No explanations were either necessary or possible with Harrison, which saved a lot of trouble to everybody except the shareholders. We were still some years from the days when every politician has a five-year plan in his waistcoat pocket, but even in the salad days of the new dispensation, Harrison's road to the millennium seemed a trifle ill-mapped. Wrapping-paper! Crawford Price's efforts to give the dream substance were hardly happier. He sent for me one day after a visit to the House of Commons. I gathered he had met some Members of Parliament. "I told them," he said, "that what we want is not a government, but a board of directors. Just like a business. And you can take it from me that there was not a man who disagreed with me. They were just silent."

This was after Gilbert Frankau had disappeared from the scene of his romantic adventure, and left behind him only the mob of contributors and a scramble of second-rate place hunters stabbing each other in the back. Luckily, after a month or so, Heitner came up from the *Great Eight* and reduced chaos to the semblance of order, and the first and last national weekly turned peacefully under his care into a successful monthly magazine. As anything else, it had to die. It looked too much like a competitor to the *Sphere*, and *The Tatler*. To make it a success without being a competitor would have required a miracle of economical administration—a news service, correspondents and a printing plant—and no contributors at all, beyond a very small and experienced editorial staff.

The editorship of such a paper would have consisted in the presentation of the news, not in a lot of talk about it. I hope we may still see a national weekly devoted to news, and chiefly news from abroad, but the venture must not be spon-

sored by an organisation without an adequate news service or without experience of handling news and preparing it for press, not in a week but in a couple of hours. I never regretted my tenuous association with *Britannia*, for I learnt what not to do about almost everything that has to be done in Fleet Street. Frankau had a harder time. The venture had been put across under his name, and had he sat still and refused to begin even thinking about his paper until every detail of the business organisation was competently set up and efficiently staffed, he would have had the ball at his feet. As it was, he took a count of nine, and then, remembering his Kipling, he got up and went back, serene and magnificent, to his business of being a novelist, and to his hobby, which is to be an occasional journalist preaching the common sense of life as it appears to business men with romantic inclinations.

Frankau's *Britannia* leads me irresistibly to Yeats-Brown's equally disastrous venture, *Everyman*. *Everyman* was *Britannia in petto*, begun, as *Britannia* should have begun: no offices, no advertisements, no vast contracts. It failed, as *Britannia* would not have failed, because, while it was no further to the Right than *Britannia*, a woolly kind of communistic internationalism had become, in the short five years which separated the ventures, the official doctrine of the governing classes. Views which were prosaic to the point of banality in 1928 had become unsound to the point of revolution in 1933.

In those few brief years truth had fled from Fleet Street. You could never tell all the truth all the time. You never will be able to do so. But you used at least to be able to tell the truth about other countries. By 1933, you did it at your peril. In 1928 there was no direct political pressure from advertisers. To-day it is not only direct but effective. Money can, of course, still be found for journals of opinion, but you cannot run a national weekly on minority views. You will not get the

support of the national advertisers. You will not get the goodwill of the distributors. Above all, you will not get your national public, which only wishes to hear that we are, after all, a great people, and which can only to-day be confirmed in that strange belief by never being allowed to know what the rest of the world really thinks of us. Few of us realised, till the fiasco of the Hoare-Laval proposals, how far the rot had gone. Then, to our horror, we saw an honest attempt to fit a policy to the realities of the situation and the world's opinion denounced with complete sincerity by an overwhelming majority of the nation, because they really believed the lies they had been told.

To go Right is to go wrong in journalism to-day. Francis Yeats-Brown is a born free-lance journalist because he has the gift of putting his personality on a piece of paper. People feel that they know him after reading four hundred words. After reading a thousand they feel that he is their friend. I cannot explain it. I doubt if he can. I can only guess that it is because he is *au fond* more interested in the impact of things on himself than in his impact on them. But, whatever the explanation of his gift, it is as patent to the public eye as it is to Gollancz's accountants.

But will he ever be allowed to use his gift in a political cause? Such men are dangerous to the great soft centre. They are not frightened, and they have nothing to lose: a dangerous combination in capitalist eyes. Bottomley was a different case. He was venal. His was the kind of independence which rich men understand.

Francis Yeats Brown is one of the most interesting characters in the world of letters. He is a natural writer in the first place, and there are only about half a dozen of them writing to-day. And, in the second place, he is a natural man: a Bohemian on horseback surviving into an industrialised world. In London he ought never to be seen out of a hansom cab.

Adventures come to him in his Bohemian, not in his military, capacity. It is his whimsicality, not his chivalry, which enables him to seize golden opportunities. Innocence, not age, brings him wisdom. When I first met him I had expected a bronzed hero of the frontier. I was surprised to find a mature and monocled cherub with a dream in his heart and a God-given capacity for surprise and alarm. The Frontier? Yes, but it is not the frontier of north-western India, but the frontier of life, which is his province, and that undiscovered country gives cause to sensitive spirits for alarm as well as surprise. To have no capacity for either is to be earth-bound. Yeats-Brown's hair is greyer since I knew him first, but he is still surprised and pleased at his surprise. I can still see him in a dancing-dive in Harlem, where he took a party of us one evening in New York, looking round, with his eye-glass screwed in firmly—an air of precision carefully cultivated, for even dreamers must be practical on occasion: "Isn't this grand." And then that pleasant if non-committal laugh which we knew so well. Non-committal because Y-B is not earth-bound. He leaves in his path many regrets but no enemies, for we shall hear him when the trumpet sounds and he will still be saying, "Isn't this grand?" But his laugh may not be for ever non-committal, for men who can face death and are not earth-bound are quite ready to kill. What is death, after all, but a frontier incident? That is Y-B's philosophy, and I know many worse.

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After editors, authors. But what do publishers know of their authors? I have published many of the famous writers of our times, but for the most part I know no more about them now than I ever did. Publishers are supposed to make "discoveries"; but the word is an impudent one, and little relevant to their function, which is the humbler one of "producing" their authors, fitting them with a task appro-

priate to their talents and in accordance with the needs of the time. Nevertheless, the unknown author of genius remains in the publisher's dream, if only for the fun of the thing. Have I ever felt like Keats, "a watcher of the stars when a new planet swims into his ken"? Perhaps not, but I have had my excitements, so far not shared with an indifferent world. Such secrets have their savour, but seldom a "good, commercial" one. The best pamphleteer I ever came across is Bernard Acworth, as a controversial writer quite in the first class, yet when we published his *Great Delusion*—an exposure of the fantasies of the "air-minded" —although we got twelve hundred columns of reviews and articles in a fortnight the book sold less than 2500 copies. To accept that book was bad publishing but good sense, the merest common decency, in fact.

When Acworth wrote his books on the navy he found a more willing audience, but had they appeared at the height of the armament instead of the disarmament crisis, they would have sold fifty times as well. More bad publishing! Yet such things are inevitable. If an author wishes to flout public opinion, nothing can stop him. But pamphleteering isn't publishing, and pamphleteers seldom make authors as publishers understand them.

A. G. Street, on the other hand, I persuaded to try his hand as a diarist of the countryside soon after his first, and possibly his best, book *Farmer's Glory* came out. It was luck that this book came into my hands,[1] since I am not a countryman and am as ignorant of the glory of farming as most farmers. The result was that Street began to write his *Countryman's Diary* in the *English Review* in 1931, and continued as long as I remained Editor. I might, if I wished to be impertinent, similarly claim the "discovery" of Charles Petrie. I published his first book and many later ones, and it was in the *English*

[1] As a reader, not as a publisher; it was published by Geoffrey Faber.

Review, of which he was Foreign Editor during the whole period of my editorship, that he laid the foundations of his great and deserved reputation as a writer on foreign affairs. But, in hard fact, his first book came to me through his agent in the ordinary way of business, in the same manner and about the same time as Francis Yeats-Brown's *Bengal Lancer* tumbled on to Gollancz's desk. There are very few publishers to whom these things do not happen sometimes, and the story of masterpieces rejected is not a long one. Gollancz rejected *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* against the advice of H. C. Harwood and myself, but that was not a case of failing to appreciate a masterpiece, but of failing to see a good joke.

The thrill of picking up a manuscript and finding that you are looking at a piece of literature is something quite different, and it is only diminished by the knowledge that if it be indeed literature it will not sell in very large quantities. The best novel I have ever published, if my English authors will forgive me for saying so, was Perez de la Ossa's *Maria Fernanda* in Allison Peers's translation. It is one of the greatest short novels in European literature. It sold about four hundred copies. I did not really expect it to sell as many, because I knew that none of the people whose names mean much to the book-reading public would understand it. Algernon Cecil's *Metternich* was another thrill. Here was that rarest of all things—a scholarly biography by a man of the world who is also a great stylist. It was called, and rightly, the best biography of the year, and appeared week after week in Miss Garvin's list of best-sellers. Yet I lost money on it because I imagined, in my ignorance, that English people were sufficiently interested in the greatest statesmen of the nineteenth century (if we except Cavour) to justify publication at 8*s.* 6*d.* The Americans were wiser in their generation. They never published it at all. They are not, it appears, Metternich-conscious.

Yet can it be wondered that I was enchanted—I use the

term correctly—when I was reminded of that charmed, and perhaps for that reason vanished society, into which we must try to find our way if we would see Metternich as he was: "We can no longer hope to reach it," I read, "by broad staircase or through lofty hall; and this although, if our latest psychic science is to be believed, the creatures of that vanished world are in some fourth-dimensional sense still somehow with us and even actually to be met with in spots hallowed by historic memories.[1] Our way into that time lies only across the thick dust of the muniment room and through the mortal stillness of the library. But, if we find and follow it, we may hope to see again, as from a masked recess, a society that lingered still in Central Europe into our own day and perished actually at our hands. Its indiscriminate destruction was to many a matter of pure rejoicing; yet there have always been some few who doubted. Not even the representatives of Republics make always good Republicans. 'We, too,' said a foreign observer with envious and melancholy meaning to Prince Bülow in 1905, as they watched together the progress of a court ball in the Salon Blanc at Berlin, 'we have seen and known all that, when the Roi Soleil was enthroned at Versailles and the cynosure of all eyes.' It was the Ambassador of France who spoke."

That is in the grand manner. Those are European accents, dated only by the age of our civilisation, circumscribed only by its ambit. Here, I felt, was a book. I was right, and the world was wrong. The world evidently much preferred something which Mr. Priestley had chosen, but the world, less evidently but more certainly, makes such preferences at its peril. Our world may be very present to those of us who live in it, but it will not endure suspended indefinitely between cause and effect.

[1]The reference is to Mr. J. W. Dunne's observations in the new edition of *An Adventure* by E. P. Jourdain and C. A. E. Moberley.

Time makes its choice; it paints or it destroys. And Time preserves what the modern world so notably lacks—an impeccable taste.

Strangest of all my excitements was Thomas Bell's brilliant *tour de force*, the novel which I called and published as *Equestrian Portrait*. In America it was called *The Breed of Basil*. It was written in more romantic English than any novelist uses to-day, Joseph Hergesheimer, who has, alas, not given us of his best for some time, alone excepted. It was a dateless story, of Eleanor de Luce and the golden age of romance. A period piece, I gathered, as my eye caught the author's damnably true statement that "there is nothing at all left of that world which she graced so charmingly. They died a long time ago, these lords and ladies, and they took with them the glow which used to bathe the city at sunset and the laughter that flared with the candlelight. The lords and ladies are all dead, and it is we who live, we who have never learnt to live gallantly with grace. Our gentlemen are not men on horseback, but taxpayers and husbands."

And this, it seemed, was a cry of valediction to those lovely yesterdays. "Surely the winters are not so cold, the snow not so white and deep as it was then, the summers not so hot. Is roasted meat so flavorous, wine so heady, now? Who can say the things they knew? I heard a horseman come across the square the other midnight, and I wondered if the sound was so very different then, when the horseman might have been Brian of Malvern."

So did I, and I read on until I reached the conviction that nothing could be more different—pleasantly different—from our world than this world, re-created out of the spacious past by an unknown bookseller's assistant in New York who had never set foot in Europe, and never will till some one wakes up and realises his genius.

Love and war and friendship at the Court of Illyria, seen

in the middle distance and with the brilliant clarity of images cut in crystal, a strange conception, but very much of an achievement. Was it worth while? God forbid that I should say that *Equestrian Portrait* was a great novel. It was never intended to be. But if you stand in the courtyard of the Bargello at Florence and look around you, you may realise that what are needful to bring these stones to life are not the passers-by of our hurried age, but men and women. Here they are, in *Equestrian Portrait*, the very men and women needed for that high purpose. As I said, a *tour de force*, but an astonishing one.

Another book of eccentric genius, even more unsaleable, was McNair Wilson's *Monarchy and Money Power*, a bold thesis challenging the bankers and their creditable philosophy. Kings rule by grace, and because they rule by grace and not by favour, they must not surrender their privileges, of which the chief is the minting of money.

McNair Wilson will some day write a great book of reminiscences, which I shall publish. Like his hero Napoleon, a man sent to change the face of the world, he dreams dreams. All men interested in power are to-day currency reformers, as in the Middle Ages they were all alchemists. There must, to such men, be no obstacle to the extension of the personality. Man, being God's creation, must be able to make the desert blossom and the rough ways plain. To McNair Wilson the king sent from God, and controlling through the reasserted supremacy of God over money the fortunes of all mankind, is a sublimated magician, not triumphing over but freed from the bonds of flesh, the Word Discarnate.

An idle dream, perhaps, but international usury is a busy reality, and in disinterring from the rubbish heap on which it had been cast by the Whig historians, the mediæval money system and the Christian theory of kingship, McNair Wilson has performed two valuable services. A third is to have

enlisted Christopher Hollis as his champion, for America has taken more kindly to Hollis than to Metternich.

While McNair Wilson believes in words, Major Douglas, whom I also publish, believes in the machine. He is by training and by temperament an engineer, and, possessing a high degree of imagination, sees that machines run not on power, but on credit. Unfortunately Douglas thinks in equations, and is incapable of dreaming. People pretend to be unable to understand the Douglas Theory, which is perhaps because its extreme simplicity contrasts so remarkably with the extreme complexity of Douglas's explanation of it. The Douglas Theory is not, strictly speaking, a theory at all, but a fact; that the amount available for spending by the consumer on consumable goods always lags behind the amount of goods potentially available for consumption. Always and necessarily, says the classical economist; always but quite unnecessarily, says Major Douglas. The consuming public saves money busily to extend its capital equipment and in doing so deprives itself constantly of the means to buy the additional goods with which it is saving to supply itself. And the remedy? Falling prices, says the classical economist; Social Credit, says Major Douglas. Ensure an expanding demand at a static price level and you have Utopia. And so say all of us, the chorus led by McNair Wilson and Douglas. But I fancy that the problem is more devastatingly simple even than the Douglas analysis, certainly more so than McNair Wilson's metaphysics, and that it is concerned neither with money nor with machines, but with men. You can take your dividend of progress and invention and mass production and scientific agriculture in leisure or in goods, but you cannot take it fully in both. There is no monetary device which will enable a nation to consume raw materials which it will not fetch and carry and trim into consumable goods which can be distributed. The distribution of purchasing power affects

the distribution of goods and services among the various social classes; but it is the amount of work done which alone affects the quantity of goods available for distribution.

This question of goods and leisure is a fundamental one. It is inherent in the dualism of human nature, and it becomes necessarily acute as the potential supply of goods increases. When men have to work twelve hours a day for the bare minimum of subsistence, men work twelve hours a day without question. To-day, we can and do get much more than the bare minimum with six hours a day, and we could get the thirteenth-century minimum with much less. Hence the growth of the greatest of modern industries, advertising, which is devoted, at the instance of its paymasters, to inducing the public to consume goods to which the public is more than a little indifferent. Only by making the cigarette-smoking public cigar-conscious, and the bus-riding public cheap-car conscious, and the Ford-Austin-Morris public limousine conscious, can we ensure a demand for all the luxuries that we can produce. Unfortunately for the manufacturers, they are not the only vested interest to intervene in this psychological battle with powerful weapons, for the teaching profession, and the political classes are engaged in making the same public leisure-conscious instead of luxury-conscious.

The first step in this direction is to make the public culture-conscious. This necessity explains the outpouring of guides to knowledge, of "omnibuses" of this and that—desperately amateurish pot-pourris of Victorian science, Whig history, Marxian economics and eighteenth-century rationalism. People want to be well informed, but the information they want is information tending to give them a good conceit of themselves, and this gives the propagandists of the left their opportunity.

The escape from this vulgarity is found to-day in books of

adventure, exploration, sailing and mountaineering, not of the donnish sophisticated kind with sunsets and apt quotations, but the unorthodox adventure. To get away from the mountains of paper and ink which stifle us and set off for the Arctic, or for the Spanish war, or across China or America, these things are to our pleasure and the books men write about them very greatly to the profit of publishers. But these, too, are not adventures of the mind. They are the escape of decent and non-Christian people from a culture that has gone sour. Alas, just as Fascism would be wholly admirable but for its tendency to produce Fascists, so the literature of escape has produced an army of dubiously-amateur escapers, who set out with a publisher's contract in their pocket, but on no account without it. "Going places," as the Americans amusingly call it, has become a profession, and the chief function of the publisher in the future will be, as far as I can see, to provide the stay-at-home citizen with vicarious adventure so that he can feel a man while his publisher is turning him into an ant.

Happy the publisher who can get a contract signed with a modern language expert off to the Arctic or a marine biologist off to ride across Siberia. Their judgments will, perhaps, lack authority, but their reactions will be intensely stimulating to a public which is above all things determined to run no risk of hearing anything it has not heard a hundred times before. My friend Hamish Hamilton scored the big success of 1936 with John Gunther's *Inside Europe*, a most entertaining volume, but I wonder greatly what the thousands of its delighted readers would have said to a book really written from the inside, really written from the European angle, and really telling them about Europe? The cream of the joke would, of course, have been that such a book would contain all the same stories, all the same plots and all the same scandals, but they would have been told about the right

people. But that, as will be realised, would be a joke in the worst possible taste.

The professors, however, and not the publishers, are responsible for the odious cult of the amateur in letters, and the scientists are the worst sinners, as I found to my cost when I was planning Benn's Sixpenny Library. I ventured to write to Dr. Marett, the distinguished anthropologist, for a book on anthropology and rashly sent him a list of the first twenty projected books in the series. One was a *History of Religion in Early Times*, and the author was to be the Rev. C. C. Martindale. I got an urgent letter from Dr. Marett by return of post. At all costs this arrangement must be cancelled. The book on religion could only be written by an anthropologist. I wired agreeing to the proposal, adding, "Writing Martindale for volume on anthropology." On further reflection Dr. Marett decided to let the original proposal stand, but accompanied his submission with a grim warning that Father Martindale's book would be nothing but a piece of Catholic propaganda unworthy of inclusion in a scholarly series. Alas, for the prophecies of scientists. When Father Martindale's diabolical essay in propaganda arrived it was accompanied by a note regretting that owing to reasons of space no mention had been made of Christianity. The reticences of theologians are indeed as astonishing in their way as the indiscretions of scientists, for when I wrote to Dean Inge about a life of Christ in the same series I got back a terse post-card which read, if I remember rightly, as follows: "As there are no materials for a life of Christ, I regret that I cannot comply with your request."

I could not help contrasting this viewpoint with that of Mr. H. G. Wells, who, on the somewhat slender foundation of a thigh-bone or two, can write the detailed life-story, accompanied by full-length portraits, of all our prehistoric ancestors, together with an exhaustive account of their social and

political ambitions, their repressions, complexes and even their love-life.

J. B. Priestley, then unknown to fame, but not, as to-day, to students of literature (for he had just contributed a brilliant but now forgotten book on Meredith to the "English Men of Letters" series), was another contributor to Benn's Sixpenny Library. I had a long conversation with him, but, as I remember, it turned chiefly on the question of pounds or guineas, although it was interspersed by some (to me) interesting talk on Dickens. I am afraid, however, that I got the impression that this part of the conversation was only thrown in to humour me. Priestley felt, I fancy, that a publisher was the kind of uncouth person who would want to talk about books, and who had to be placated. Perhaps, however, I am doing him an injustice. Perhaps he merely felt that my humble observations were not up to his level. I shall, I fear, never know, for since that rather distant day I have only had one contact with the famous novelist and dramatist, *apropos* an article of his in the *Star* on the dearth of good literary critics. This interested me, for I had, writing for me at that time in the *English Review*, two of the very best literary critics in England, Hugh Kingsmill and Herbert Agar, both of whom would then have jumped at the chance of regular reviewing on a daily or weekly paper. I sent a dozen numbers of the *Review* to Priestley and expressed my pleasure that he had dared to say openly what everybody knew to be the truth about nine-tenths of contemporary book reviewing.

I felt in the circumstances that he might like the opportunity of bringing these critics before the notice of some of his editors. Alas for my expectations, Priestley wrote to say that he regretted that he had no time to read periodicals, but that he was sure that the "young men" in question would

make their names in due course. I wondered, and still wonder, why he was so sure. It is, unfortunately, simply untrue to-day that good writers secure recognition. The one consoling reflection is that they are for that reason safe against its manifold and evident temptations.

One must, of course, beware of the lurking fallacy. As Arnold Lunn wisely remarked long ago: "All Shelleys get kicked at school, but every one who is kicked at school is not a Shelley." Most unsuccessful writers are unimportant writers, but so are most successful writers.

Seeing authors, as I have done every day of my life for the last twelve years or more, and being on nodding terms with most of those usually described as famous, if not great, I have been struck above all else by the fact that none of the younger generation of successful writers desires to say or to hear any new thing. The technical level of writing to-day is higher than at any time in recorded history, but there is no intellectual curiosity behind it. The great Edwardians, whom one might also legitimately call the last of the Victorians—Shaw, Wells, Chesterton, Bennett, Belloc, Galsworthy, Conrad—though they were genuinely creative artists, were each moved by a philosophy of life which was new to their contemporaries. It was for their ideas, not for their art, that their contemporaries admired or attacked them. Their views were news. To this old tradition belongs also, perhaps pre-eminently, H. A. L. Fisher, who wrote his magnificent *History of Europe* at my suggestion—a sufficient justification for any publisher's existence.

Incomparably the most powerful and original intellect among the younger writers to-day is Christopher Dawson, who is, on the contrary, quite unknown to newspaper writers and to popular critics. Dawson's sensitive scholarship would be shocked if it were otherwise. But the even more interesting fact is that he is almost equally unknown to the intelligentsia.

He is engaged in laying the foundations of an historical approach to a scientific sociology, an intellectual task of supreme importance. Reviewers reading his books as they appear are, of course, impressed and say so, but the intellectual world is not interested. It is, on the other hand, intensely interested in Aldous Huxley, in E. M. Forster, in Virginia Woolf, in Arthur Calder Marshall, in Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden and Cecil Day Lewis.

It is interested in points of view, in reactions, in impacts, in the human comedy and in the passive elaboration of contemporary tendencies. One may argue plausibly enough that the task of men of letters does not necessarily take them further, but that is to ignore the modern problem, the conquest of power by mind. This is the new problem created by contemporary conditions, and our failure to solve it is not perhaps surprising. What is surprising is the failure to recognise that the problem exists. I approached the edge of the problem in the essay with which I prefaced my translation of René Quinton's *Maximes sur la Guerre*, where I examined the conflict of intellect and will and tried to define the social function of the combatative will in the evolution of civilisation. I was surprised and pleased to get a letter from Sir Arthur Keith, enclosing a copy of his Rectorial Address at Aberdeen on "The Place of Prejudice in Civilisation," in which he remarked on the similarity of our conclusions, adding: "The world will not listen to us to-day, but some day it will have to."

That my own essay should be misread or not read at all did not surprise me. What surprised me was that this address, from the pen of a distinguished scientist, containing much provocative and original thought on matters obviously of urgent consequence, had attracted no interest at all. I have since realised the extent of the wilful obscurantism of the writing and reading classes. They are seeking, not a cause for which to live and die, but a formula of escape, and they

find it in a mechanised society, autocratically controlled and scientifically regulated in the interests of leisure, plenty and safety. They acquiesce in the prospect, despite their full consciousness—witness Aldous Huxley and Bertrand Russell—of its degrading features. They reserve their indignation for those who seek to restore the foundations of a free and Christian world.

They profess to resent the use of force, but what they really object to is the assertion by free men and free peoples of their rights against the political classes. The last time I met Orage was at Herbert Agar's when Orage and I got into conversation with Kingsley Martin of the *New Statesman* on this very point. It was interesting to see the complete reversal of the rôles of the progressive and the reactionary. Orage and I, who before the war were considered rather scatter-brained radicals, had become men of the Right. Kingsley Martin, denying to the individual and the group every right, including that of conscience, which conflicted with the interests of the political classes, regarded himself as an orthodox representative of "progressive" opinion. Yet in 1914 Colonel Sanderson and Joynson Hicks would have regarded his views as too reactionary even for them. As with liberty, so with capitalism. The only serious attack on the capitalist system to-day comes from the men of the extreme Right. The Russian economic system is the logical conclusion of the state-capitalist system under which we live; it represents the final, irreversible and total denial to the individual or group of the right of controlling the means of their own livelihood. Admiration of this system is to-day the test of political orthodoxy. Only in the Catholic press, inspired by the tradition of Chesterton and Belloc, which is carried on to-day by McNair Wilson, Christopher Hollis, Douglas Woodruff and Count Michael de la Bedoyère (and what press possesses more brilliant editors than these last ?) are bankers attacked, foreigners treated as our

equals in integrity and intelligence, or the cause of liberty sustained.

The affection is of the head rather than the heart, but it is so deep-seated that it has, in the past two years, led the politically orthodox into dangerous and desperate courses, threatening the peace of the world and the whole future of society. Nothing, to the politically orthodox to-day, means what it says. Personal liberty means monopolistic capitalism; progress means the extension of monopolistic capitalism nearer to the point when the monopoly is absolute; peace means war over the whole face of the globe. Political liberty means mob rule; the preservation of freedom means the condonation of assassination and loot. Fascism, as applied to English, French and Spanish politicians, means Chestertonian liberalism. Territory governed under a League mandate means territory which, unlike the territory of sovereign states, is inalienable; the right of free speech and free assembly means the right to refuse free speech and free assembly to people who object to your own views. A legally-constituted government means either the government of a non-existent state or a government which has ceased to govern. An odious tyranny is a government elected by a ninety-nine per cent majority; non-intervention means intervention on one side; the League of Nations means the Triple Entente; a peace ballot means an inquiry on your readiness to go to war.

I am not concerned in this chapter with the political implications of these extraordinary inversions. It might even be conceded that the politics they subserve are all wise and far-sighted, but it would still be true that the shock to the intellectual integrity of a nation which the habitual use of these inversions involves is likely to prove mortal. On a long view, the situation is as dangerous as it can be. The popular press and platform are held by men who are preaching Communist conclusions from Liberal premisses. The result, as in

the eighteenth century, will inevitably be a revolt from the old orthodoxies. Already there is an almost complete divorce between the old-fashioned progressives and the mind of youth, which keenly resents the transparently disingenuous efforts of the professors to harness their revolutionary enthusiasm to stale and irrelevant Victorian dogmas. The result is threefold. Firstly, a steady drift of the more honest progressives towards an open profession of revolutionary Communism and an open hostility to Christianity. Secondly, an immense recruitment to the intellectual forces of the Right, who have an overwhelming majority of the writers with any serious pretensions to intellect or scholarship. Thirdly, the steady and now increasingly rapid undermining of the foundations of the current political orthodoxy, which, professing itself the creed of all sensible men, is rapidly becoming the creed of an elderly minority, bolstered up by the lip-service only of second-class careerists. Liberalism is already dead. The Trades' Union Labour Party is dying. The Central Office has anæsthetised Conservatism into a coma.

All this would not matter tuppence except for one fact. The discredited men and the discredited philosophies retain a stranglehold on political office and on the press. They appeal daily to the torpor and the craven spirit of the "great soft centre" to keep together, lest anything good, bad or indifferent should be done, and they deck their somnolent warnings with a veneer of middle-class culture and the lustre of dead names and vanished enthusiasms.

Here is the material of revolution.

Here is that divorce between the ideas of the real thinkers and writers, who alone move the hearts and minds of the next generation, and the ideas of the politically orthodox, with their retinue of professors, propagandists and place-men, which brought down the *ancien régime*. Here is the situation which will inevitably, and for the same reasons, bring

about the collapse of the Western European democratic system.

The very assurance and complacent cynicism of the progressives is the dead spit of the complacency and assurance of the men of the *ancien régime*. As an editor and publisher I experience this amusingly enough. Writers of the Left to-day are serene and assured; men of the world, men of business, ready to meet any reasonable request. They are securely harnessed to the political machine, and though they still pretend to be daring and advanced, their profound contentment arises from the knowledge that they are "in" on a good "racket." Above all they are, and are content to be, professional writers or teachers. They believe in salvation by the word, and in a society given over hand and foot to the new aristocracy of the pen and the desk they feel essentially at ease. Only at the threat of war do they begin to feel uneasy, just as the men of the Right only then begin to shake themselves free of the author complex through the heartening realisation that for the next few years they may not have to be authors. To be quite unimportant is naturally galling to any of us, and the root of the author complex is the conviction that the author is, in the ultimate reckoning, an unimportant person.

Low's cartoons, on the other hand, reflect the naïve but firm conviction of their own importance of the writers of the political Left. To Low, every junior officer is a bloated and dunder-headed ass; every general a gluttonous bully; every capitalist a crook; every Christian a cad, and every gentleman a fool. Low really believes, bless him, that he and his political friends represent not only the highest incarnation of human wisdom yet attained, but the highest level of virtue. Am I mad, or is the rest of the world mad? Low barely considers the question worth answering. But outside the small group of explicitly Catholic writers, the men of the Right find that this

question presents an intolerable dilemma. There must be something wrong somewhere. It may be gold or oil, Jesuits or Jews, Party Funds or Russian Funds, the press lords, the advertisers or the publishers. But it must be one of these things, for they are men of the world; they are sane, and they know that when they go about among the men who are doing the world's work, such men think them sane. Yet their books do not sell; they are not wanted in the press; they are boycotted at Broadcasting House. And they have to live.

And so you find them writing for the films, or organising pageants, or travelling for profit, or fighting or preaching or going on the Stock Exchange.

As far as books are concerned the explanation is simpler than these victims of the author complex imagine. Popular novelists apart, no man has ever lived out of the writing of books, except on a scale which satisfies only saints, scholars, heroes and members of the writing classes. No authors belong to the first three categories, and few authors of the Right to the last category. A ten-and-sixpenny biography which sells 10,000 copies is an extreme rarity, yet it will bring the author less than £1000, and should represent at least a year's work. The average sales of biographies are certainly not more than 2500, and the author's earnings on them will not reach £200. People born into the writing classes have the same instinctive knowledge of the economic conditions of their trade as any other tradesmen; but the men of the Right are a mixed bag —soldiers, sailors, tinkers, tailors, landed proprietors and adventurers. For that reason they write much better than their more professional contemporaries, but they view the world in general and their unfortunate publishers in particular, with a greatly increased suspicion.

How far is this suspicion justified? I fancy not at all, unless the publisher is to be regarded as responsible for the system under which he is not only a professional consultant, like a

doctor, a lawyer or an accountant, but a professional money-lender as well. The bookseller is expected, by subscribing the books before they are published and in most cases without reading them, to underwrite the publisher's loans, charging, of course, a substantial commission. The whole business of publishing is thus a vast network of extremely hazardous speculations, with large profits and losses more or less cancelling out. The good authors pay for the bad, or perhaps I should say the bad for the good. The publisher loses on the one and makes on the other because his costs, spread over a large edition and in advertising a better-known name are smaller, while the selling price of a novel by Hugh Walpole or Priestley is the same as that of a novel by an unknown.

This system is countered, so far as the agents and the successful authors can manage it, by the system of bogus "advances" on royalties, which in the case of the already rich and famous are so high as to be in fact an outright purchase for a lump sum, without the compensating advantage that if the book bought at so seemingly fantastic a price does sell a million copies, you score.

But the authors who can successfully demand "bogus" advances are few, if eminent. The authors who can insist on a twenty per cent or twenty-five per cent royalty are fewer still, and it is on the intermediate authors—those who usually sell from 2000 to 3000 but may perhaps jump to 7000 or 10,000 —and who demand only moderate advances and earn, on the average, a fifteen per cent to a seventeen-and-a-half per cent royalty, that the publisher makes his money, if he ever does. On the author who always sells over 7000 he won't make as much, for certainty in bales is worth its weight in gold to the author.

When I say this I must not be understood to suggest that the publisher makes more than the author. I have taken the accounts of book after book from my costing ledger and found

in every case without exception that the bookseller makes most in gross receipts, the author next and the publisher last. As to profit, the order may quite arguably be reversed.

Take a novel by a relatively unknown novelist which sells exactly 5000 copies. It costs the publishers:

For printing and binding 5300 copies (including 300 free copies)	£300 0 0
Advertising, catalogues and travelling	200 0 0
	£500 0 0

The publisher's receipts are say:

1000 copies at 5*s.* (if he is very lucky)	£250 0 0
3000 „ „ 4*s.* 6*d.*[1]	625 0 0
1000 „ „ 3*s.* 3*d.*	162 5 0
	£1037 5 0
His payments to the author will be, let us say, at a 15 % royalty, (and it will not be less unless the book is an absolutely freak seller or a first novel).	£275 0 0
	£762 0 0
Gross profit to the publisher (nothing whatever for overheads, rent, taxes, salaries, etc.) - - - - - - -	£262 5 0

[1] The Trade price of 4/6 is a rough figure allowing for special terms to wholesalers, Travellers' Commissions, special terms to Libraries and so forth.

How much the bookseller gets is an uncertain factor. In the first place, certainly a third and possibly two-thirds of the total sales will be to the libraries, including Boots's Libraries, whose subscriptions do not necessarily bear any actuarial relation to the value of the goods they supply. Again, some of the copies bought by genuine booksellers may remain unsold. Assuming, however, that out of the whole sale of 5000 copies only 2400 copies were actually sold to the public through booksellers, the booksellers' receipts will still be £300, and there will be an additional incalculable sum from the libraries.

But as to profit. How much of the time of the author; how much of the rent, rates, staff salaries and interest charges of the publisher; and the rent, rates, wages and interest charges of the bookseller are to be debited to the book? I can only answer for the publisher with certainty. A publisher's overheads vary between twenty per cent and twenty-six per cent of his turnover. Taking these on this book as twenty per cent, the publisher's net profit is well under £50. The bookseller's overheads can hardly be less. As for the author, if he is a spare-time author like so many novelists, he may reckon his profit at seventy-five per cent of his receipts. If he is writing for a livelihood he has no business to be writing novels which sell 5000 copies only occasionally and only in England. If they sell 5000 copies regularly and sell in America as well, and if he can manage two a year, he will be getting a twenty-per-cent royalty here and a fifteen-per-cent royalty in America, and will be making something like £1200 a year.

But now, lest any one think that he has learnt "the truth about publishing," as Stanley Unwin once called it, let me tell him a secret: There is no such thing. The figures which I have given of advertising, travelling and cataloguing are not average figures, for there is no such thing as an average figure.

I may spend £150 or £200 advertising a book for a thousand different reasons, but none of them will apply to any other book. I may want the world to know, at this particular moment, how much I advertise; I may believe in the author's future; he may be an amateur novelist, but a well-established biographer, whose next biography I covet. I may—most probable explanation of all—have hoped for a sale of 10,000 copies, and failed to guess it right. Or the author may (tell it not in Gath) be a friend of mine who is clinging to me; or an enemy who is threatening to leave me. "One thing is certain and the rest is lies." Publishing is not a business, but a form of speculation hedged round with numerous and desirable professional restrictions, but still a speculation. At least it ought to be. If it ever becomes a business, it will be because the culture racket has begun to work, because the dream of the eighteenth-century poet has come true upside down:

> Let laws and learning, art and commerce die
> But spare, oh spare, our new nobility

of the pen and the desk, the Labour Party and the 1917 Club.

Granted a dead, standardised culture of trite, question-begging maxims; a rigid orthodoxy of opinion which men depart from at their peril and adolescents not at all; that denial of man's immortality which means the end of all spiritual adventure; and that desire to escape the consequences of his mortality which induces the foolish and vulgar attempt to build a heaven on earth out of the rubbish of contemporary speculations—granted all these things, publishing will become as profitable as keeping a public-house is at present. But publishers will not for that reason be as interesting as publicans. Publicans know something about human nature. The

publishers of the new age—if it comes—will thrive on their ignorance of the Everlasting Man, like mushrooms rampant on a well-regulated dung heap. Easy, no doubt, would be their lot in these congenial surroundings and proud their eminence, but hardly proof of the vitality of our historic liberties against the challenge of pagan despotisms and oriental speculations.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

POLITICS: MAINLY FROM WITHOUT

HAROLD LASKI contends that the political power in these islands is now in dispute between the people, led by the intelligentsia, and the privileged classes, whose weapon for the destruction of democracy is Fascism. That simple theory does not greatly commend itself to me. If I attempted an equally sweeping generalisation, I should say that it is in dispute between the politically-organised classes, who find no difficulty under a democratic system in achieving a dictatorship, and the unorganised majority, whose reaction against this dictatorship is called Fascism. The flaw in this otherwise accurate diagnosis of the situation is that the politically organised, though they have achieved a dictatorship surely enough, have yet achieved it so pleasantly that there is, so far, no reaction whatever against them.

I never appreciated this flaw in the argument more clearly than when I visited Oswald Mosley in his late headquarters at Chelsea. The rich and successful dislike Mosley; I do not. He has a disarming simplicity. He is very un-English in his dislike of forms and red-tape and of the slow progress nowhere in particular which fills up the lives of Kensington and Belgravia. His great creed is that one should not bisect one's life into the years of intake and the years of output. For a man to be worth while as a leader he must go on taking in. In other words, he must not be a politician. He must mix as easily with all sorts of men as with all sorts of ideas. But if you wish to be not worth-while but successful, you must be the opposite of this in every respect. In other words, if you wish to be a

dictator, you must be, and look like, Mr. Baldwin; you must on no account be or look like Oswald Mosley. That is why we are free to be ruled by Mr. Baldwin and his friends, and why we can only change our government by voting for a Socialist government, which can only retain office by dropping Socialism. The permitted differences between the rival dictatorships are those of pace, not direction, and the chance of reversing the direction is not a whit greater under our system than under the German, Italian or Russian system. Indeed, unless our newspapers lie, our system is more secure than those of the three dictatorships, which must mean, if it means anything, that whereas the dictators are liable to be overthrown at any moment by the peoples whom they govern, Mr. Baldwin, Major Attlee and their kind are not. And that was just the impression which my talks with Oswald Mosley confirmed.

Mosley is a great orator; among my generation, only John Strachey can even run him close, and the intellectual content of Strachey's effervescence is too thin even for the Albert Hall on a Sunday afternoon. Mosley is also, which most people deny, an important man. This is because most people who say this do not define their terms. He is quite obviously not a great thinker, and he is not an organiser at all. He has no great chance of attaining a responsible position in the public life of Europe. He is, however, telling the truth as he sees it, and he is one of the few people in England who are even trying to do so. You cannot be even half-informed about what is really happening in Europe if you do not read Mosley's papers. He has sacrificed the certainty of office for the certainty of a life in the political wilderness. Like King Edward VIII. he knows that whether or no Baldwinism is doomed it is certainly damned. The one is termed to-day a vain pleasure-seeker and the other a vain careerist. It is a wise axiom to-day in politics to begin by reversing the popular judgment. I will not be

guilty of the impertinence of passing any judgment at all on the late King. I have neither the knowledge nor the inclination.

But to call Mosley a careerist is itself impertinence of the most vulgar order.

His Achilles heel is planning—a relic of his Young Tory and New Party days. But you cannot talk to him for five minutes without realising that he believes absolutely in the necessity for breaking with the old political parties if we, as a people, are to survive. We have got to call up all the reserves of character, integrity and energy, he told me, and this means mobilising the non-political classes. Otherwise the interests will get their way. He does not believe that he will succeed in his own chosen fashion. He does believe that it is somebody's duty to keep alive in times of tolerable prosperity an active distrust of the political machines, so that when adversity comes, the people may not find themselves without hope.

"That's all very well," I said, "but what are we to hope for from Fascism? Constitutional changes are a means, not an end. What kind of world are you going to build, once you have mobilised enough energy and enough integrity to build it?" To that question there was, and is, no answer. The sad suspicion in my mind is that Mosley is not a bad Fascist; he is merely a much better politician. "Why," I asked him, "did you call your movement Fascist?"

"Because I got tired of explaining that we weren't Fascists," was the surprising answer. "Also, it seemed honester."

This was revealing, but not as revealing as my tour of the headquarters. We had lunched in the canteen where, as Mosley explained, there was no discipline. We went to look at the iron discipline after lunch. When we went into the first room, the man nearest to us stood quite smartly to attention. Those in the middle distance got up rather self-consciously and played with the pens on their desks; at the back of the room a mere

shuffling of feet represented the modest tribute of British common sense to the Fascist spirit.

"Raw recruits," Mosley said, with commendable presence of mind, as we made a hurried exit, the Leader leading.

We continued our tour. The staff in the next room, I was warned, were busy, working overtime day and night. They would, I gathered, be too experienced (as the others had been too inexperienced) to interrupt their work. I gathered correctly. "Worn out," Mosley said majestically. "Now, would you like a cigar?"

The other side of the picture I saw at the famous Olympia meeting, where there was a large force of well-disciplined Blackshirts, an imposing body of men. But then there was opposition at Olympia, and opposition inspires. That is Mosley's theory. He preaches in the East End not because he dislikes Jews, but because Jews dislike him. That is good tactics, but if the movement were inspired by a real creative impulse it would not need to be stimulated quite in that way. My conclusion is that Fascism lacks the creative impulse; that it is, of its essence, an act of revolt, and that, as far as England is concerned, the revolt is not yet there. Whether, if and when it comes, the dubious advantage which Mosley will possess of being able to say, "I told you so," will be sufficient to make him the leader is quite another matter. At the moment, British Fascism is simply a party machine without a party, the spiritual curse of the age without its secular justification.

In this respect, in this quite damnable respect, British Fascism is like the League of Nations.

I remember hearing Sir Austen Chamberlain and Mr. Arthur Henderson discussing the merits of the Genevan system one afternoon in 1930, and being struck not by the identity of their views (which, as far as foreign policy went, was common knowledge), but by their common enthusiasm for the system irrespective of results for the machine, irrespective of its

purpose. Both were men with a long, honourable, if prosaic, record in domestic politics, but both were men of the machine. I use the word in no derogatory sense; I only mean that both had, from their earliest years, been associated with the official organisations of the parties which they were in due course to lead. Both had now come to see in Geneva the quintessences of machine politics, politics *in excelsis*, politics on a world stage with representatives not of interests and trade unions, but of kingdoms and empires as their clients. Hardly do we get to Geneva, they told us almost in one breath, before we are rung up by some representative of one or other of the great powers, anxious to see, to persuade or to flatter the representatives of the great, the impeccable and never-to-be-defeated British democracy.

It was a revealing point of view. But those who regard our democratic system at home as unassailable would be wise to consider how quickly this golden vision (which at the time was true enough) has faded. That luncheon party, if I remember rightly, was only seven years ago. But where are the great powers at Geneva to-day, and where the invincible British democracy? Of the Council of that day, Germany, Japan, Italy and Christian Spain are no longer supporters of the League system; China can no longer feel as confident as she did of the virtues of Genevan tea parties, and the British democracy has ceased to exercise a decisive influence on the councils of continental Europe.

And why? Not because our representatives were not great and good men. Heaven forbid such a thought. Solely because the great powers who wished to change the balance of power in Europe and Asia found that under the democratic system of Geneva no change could be effected, and were not prepared, as Sir Austen and Uncle Arthur admittedly were, to sacrifice their political objectives even to save the political machine.

That, of course, was not the true spirit of Geneva; just as

it would not be, even to-day, in the slump of Westminster. No change which will prejudice us; that is the spirit of Geneva and Westminster, and it is bound in the long run at Westminster, as in the short run at Geneva, to defeat itself. Democratic organisations attach to their support men with great political talents, often of high integrity and always of confident aspect. But they do not attract, and cannot assimilate, men of dynamic energies. Men sent to change the face of the world do not appeal to committees to advise them how to do it. There was no round table conference on Calvary. And this is as true of democracies as of dictatorships. When, in a crisis, democracy turns and fights, it has first to disembarrass itself of the whole outfit of democratic politicians. So it was in England under Cromwell; in France under Napoleon; and in Spain (on both sides) to-day. In Italy and Germany the cardboard democracy surrendered to the sound of marching men, and the paper democracy at Geneva surrendered to the sound of a voice. The English democracy, admittedly tougher, surrendered to the Irish rebels at the point of the revolver.

While Sir Austen Chamberlain and Mr. Arthur Henderson were singing the praises of Geneva, I was watching Sir John Simon, who was sitting opposite. He too, was to experiment with words as an instrument of policy, but on this occasion he said nothing, though he entertained us later with some reminiscences of W. G. Grace. I could not help thinking, as I looked at his cold, penetrating eyes, that he hardly shared the unclouded optimism of the two elder statesmen, and, when his turn came to follow their footsteps, as it did come soon, it was his temperament, cautious to the verge of pessimism, which was his undoing.

I first saw Sir John Simon at close quarters at the opening of the Liberal election campaign of 1923. He followed Mr. Asquith and Lord Grey, and froze the hall in five minutes. His career is an illuminating commentary on the inherent

weakness of democracies. He speaks with authority and power only on those rare occasions when democracy is not only ready but able to fight. He cannot hypnotise himself into believing that words are enough.

For a different reason, Leo Amery, our host at the luncheon in 1930, is not an harmonious element in the democratic machine. He wants to change many things. Above all, he wants to make the Cabinet an instrument for effecting drastic changes in the character of society. The cabinet system could, no doubt, be so modified, but its virtue, in democratic eyes, is its supreme efficiency in not interfering with changes which are being brought about by other agencies. A Cabinet which persisted in interfering with that form of interested cog-rolling which somnolent old professors call the process of evolution would be out of office in a week.

The Labour Party used to be the party of revolution, because they imagined that the older parties would never tolerate the advent of Socialism. This was because the older Labour men were brought up on eighteenth and early nineteenth-century dialectic, with much talk about the rich and the privileged and the landlords as the villains of the piece. But the Labour Party to-day have not failed to notice that since the days of Burt and Fenwick, the aristocracy of commerce has destroyed the landlords and have themselves been destroyed by the industrialisation of the whole world in the early years of the present century. The new aristocracy of the pen and the desk, the bureaucrats, the organisers, and the big business executives with salaries and commissions bringing their incomes (without any responsibility) far beyond the dreams of a landlord's avarice, will offer no opposition at all to the logical development of big business into Socialism, for under Socialism the state will step in and preserve their activities from criticism and competition alike.

The lesson taught by Sir X—— Y——, when he exchanged

the most unpopular post in the Ministry and £2000 a year for a permanent seat in Parliament, immunity from criticism and a secure £5000 a year, is interesting and relevant to the now almost universal appeal of socialistic measures to the political classes. On the morning when the full details of this astonishing act of "sacrifice" were published, I was sitting next to another famous politician at the Athenæum. He looked up from his newspaper and suddenly announced that he was going to write a short story. I was surprised, and asked him why. "I've got such a fine title," he explained. "Crucifixion of Sir X——"

It has, of course, already been decided that the great combines, as they are taken over by the political classes, will be immunized from Parliamentary control and will be lavishly staffed by members of the political classes, not excluding the present officials of the Trade Unions. I like to complete the picture with a pleasant dream. The heads of these great organisations will not be called directors, a name savouring of capitalism; or commissioners, which savours of Parliamentarianism; nor yet commissars, which savours of Communism; but National Trustees, and their remuneration will take the form not of salary but of expenses.[1] In this way the great anomaly of our present business system, whereby rich men who wear themselves out in the service of the community yet pay more than a quarter of their income in taxation, will be remedied, and public service at last appropriately dignified.

Whether the changes will be accompanied, as some hope, by the abolition of the titles and orders which are all that the public servant got in the last century, is still uncertain. I should like to think so, for that would mean in the new Utopia the end of all empty distinctions. There would just be two classes; the public servants and the public: there would be no hereditary

[1] But prophecy is too easy in these days. This suggestion was made by the Labour Party in the debate on ministerial salaries in April, 1937.

or other titles to create an embarrassing no-man's land between the lines of the rich and the poor.

And yet, I wonder! And it is because I am still naïve enough to wonder that I remain at least on the fringes of politics. I have at anyrate one reward, that, being born and never having ceased to be a radical, I am a member of the only potentially revolutionary party.

It is this fact, of course, that makes Conservatives so feared and Labour so frightened to-day. We have, as in everything else, reached an exact inversion. The cartoonists of my youth liked to make clubmen's flesh creep with visions of labour agitators using machine-guns in Trafalgar Square. Now Low makes the flesh of the working classes creep with pictures of dyspeptic Colonel Blimps ordering massacres from Pall Mall. What a brave new world it would be if the clubmen of Pall Mall would indeed get out their bows and arrows to shoot the political racketeers. But alas, Low's drawings are only the fantasies of an uneasy conscience, as I of all people know, since I have spent so many years trying to restrain the Conservatives from muscling-in on the Socialist racket. What a change since 1917. To suggest, even faintly, revolutionary measures in the 1917 Club (of which I was an original member) in 1917 would have been taken as a sign of ill-conditioned youth. To-day, to suggest any opposition at all to Socialistic measures is equally fatal at the Carlton Club. The sad and terrible truth is that those excellent friends of mine whom Low depicts as ordering machine-guns to mow down the mob are engaged daily in chanting in unison, "We must move with the times." To this dull and complacent conviction of the Tory rank and file, and not to any political genius or (dare I say it) enthusiasm on the part of his own supporters, is due the steady, or gradual, realisation at home of all Low's ambitions and policies. The only people who are dissatisfied, in addition to seventy per cent of the public, are not the non-

existent Colonel Blimps but such un-Blimpish persons as Hilaire Belloc, Alan Herbert, T. S. Eliot, Roy Campbell, Wyndham Lewis, J. B. Morton, Jack Squire and myself.

It was with promise of support from these and many others, including Edmund Blunden, Douglas Woodruff, Liddell Hart and R. H. Mottram, that I agreed to take on the editorship of the *English Review* in 1931. Labour had just come into office, and the usual search for scapegoats had begun at the Conservative Headquarters. Mr. Baldwin had offered to help every one at some one else's expense "from the cradle to the grave" and had been defeated for his pains. Was there no alternative, we asked ourselves, to the slow drift towards Socialism on the tide of competitive benevolence? Was it impossible to re-state the Conservative case in terms which would appeal to the man in the street and the man on the land; to offer them not a deferred path to the Socialist gaol but a new path to another goal?

Excellent sentiments, no doubt, but what was the new goal to be? The Liberal ideal of free money, with free thought as a sedative to uneasy consciences, was dead. I soon found that while there was agreement on the theory of Conservatism—state action directed to the preservation of the economic liberty of the individual—there was a profound scepticism as to the possibility of doing anything about it. Between the minority of greedy financiers who wanted to continue the Edwardian gamble in men's lives and the mass of the new trades unionists and bureaucratic planners who wanted to plant themselves securely on the taxpayer's back under the plea of public service, lay the majority of the nation. But did they, or did any one else, know what they wanted? In times of prosperity they wanted to be left alone. In times of stress, such as the country was entering in the autumn of 1930, they wanted to be helped. How were we going to help them? I remember dining at Brooks's Club one evening in 1930 when

the crisis was rapidly approaching. Some one, I think it was L. S. Amery, suggested that the reckless finance of the Labour Administration was responsible for the crisis. I ventured to put an awkward question. Did we really agree that Government economy would restore employment? We did. Then why had we not, from 1924 to 1929, reduced Government expenditure drastically year by year? My friends smiled; it was not practical politics; it was just a dream of youth. Perhaps, but the dream was not without its *arrière pensée*, for, getting the replies I expected, I told my friends roundly that the Conservative Party had never in fact believed in economy. Obviously if it had so believed, it could have faced the unpopularity of the first three years of reduced expenditure in order to reap the popularity of the boom which, on their economic theory, would result by the last year of their tenure or office.

And as with economy, so with private enterprise, and, most notably, with the small business. The small business, with agriculture, is the necessary backbone of a free country. Without these, there is no large body of economically independent citizens, no training ground for character, no natural scope for invention and initiative, no adequate competition and no room for the free play of supply and demand between industry and industry. But could such businesses be saved? Was not the whole trend of the times towards standardisation and rationalisation? And as with industry, so with agriculture. Of course we wanted to restore agriculture. But could we really do so? Could we afford to risk the loss of our Argentine investments, the loss of our shipbuilding and our banking business? I shall never forget General Maxwell, one of our distinguished merchant bankers, now dead, coming up to me with tears in his eyes after a speech of Lord Lloyd's at an *English Review* dinner a year or two later, and taking me desperately into a corner: "It's all very well, Jerrold; this talk

about agriculture, but how am I going to live in the meantime?" I was, and still am, unable to answer. Casualties are as inevitable under clean as under crooked politics.

It would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that the *English Review*, and the fortnightly meetings of its associated lunch club which I founded, were quite without political influence. Both ventures, however, failed absolutely in their purpose as I saw it, which was to provide an effective point of contact between the Conservative caucus and the political classes. We certainly achieved contact. Almost all our writers and speakers —W. S. Morrison (to-day the one great hope of our politics), Charles Petrie, A. G. Street, Herbert Agar and Arnold Wilson, for instance, became regular lecturers at Ashridge and even on more highly orthodox platforms. And the politicians, for their part, talked and wrote for us, notably Lord Lloyd, Lord Winterton, L. S. Amery and Robert Horne. But save for a few months when George Lloyd almost led us, these contacts were mere formalitites, we invited the politicians to speak because they filled our lunches; they invited us to lecture because we amused their audiences. George Lloyd again excepted, the only politician who ever gave me the impression of caring as well as knowing what we wanted was Lord Carson. That considerable changes in the social and economic structure were necessary if the drift to Communism was to be arrested was common ground among all, but was Sir Robert Horne, for instance, professor, lawyer and civil servant, called to the city purple because of his great administrative abilities, really concerned at the prospect of society handed over lock, stock and barrel to professional administrators? Somehow, I doubted it. Being a Scot, he enjoyed the intellectual stimulus of our discussions, but he enjoyed them for their own sake, in the true Scottish metaphysical spirit. I had an amusing instance of this after one *English Review* lunch when he took me firmly by the arm as I was walking downstairs and told me with great warmth

of the pleasure which he always derived from reading my monthly "Comments." They were "good thinking . . . that's what I enjoy . . . you must never give them up." Were I to stop writing them, I gathered, his life would be distinctly less enjoyable. At the foot of the stairs we parted, with expressions of mutual regard, and he went ahead of me to the cloakroom. Following him half a minute later, I found him in warm conversation with the late Harold Cox, the veteran free-trade individualist in whose weekly articles in the *Morning Post* every one of the cardinal *English Review* doctrines was consistently attacked. I could not help overhearing the end of the conversation: ". . . good thinking . . . that's what I enjoy. You must never give them up." Alas, we have both "given them up" long since but the Great Western Railway goes on sufficiently. And long may it continue to do so.

Behind this perfectly true story lies the secret of our modern tragi-comedy. The joy in practical work well done is greater by far than any satisfaction derived from the writing of books or the making of speeches. The men of the Conservative Party are almost invariably men of affairs, and they cannot be drawn away from practice to the study of theory. The only two really great speculative thinkers whom the party has ever recognised were both entirely devoid of the talent for practical affairs and were both driven into politics by debt. Neither Burke nor Disraeli were great men in the sense that Lord Salisbury was a great man, or great national leaders in the sense that Mr. Baldwin is, when he chooses. But they related practice to sound theory and did all the "good thinking" that has ever been done in the Conservative front benches for the last 150 years. The energies of the rest have been absorbed elsewhere.

The politics of the Left are energised by the desire, amounting almost to hunger, of the reading and talking classes for a world which will satisfy their psychological need

for practical activity. On the Conservative side all this is reversed. Only the country gentleman, now extinct, had any unsatisfied urge to action. For the rest, men will exchange the conduct of affairs, the management of big estates or the building of big business for the certainties of political office, but never for the routine of politics as a career. As for political theory, that is something they read of in the weekly and monthly reviews, on Sundays when their wives are at church. The Conservative back-benchers are expected, if they be men of ability, to have their interests elsewhere.

I shall never forget an experience I had in the North of England, where I have been asked by my friend Douglas Boot,[1] a brilliant and fervent Tory of the Disraeli school, to give the opening lecture at the Northern Counties Conservative Summer School. Every one was assembled for the occasion; the President, the Treasurer, the Chairman and every other official of all the Conservative Associations concerned; a minor Minister was to open the school, the Mayor was to say a few words, and, wonder of wonders, even a few of the "County" were present. We were all having tea before the proceedings began. A good many of those present were friends of mine and I was trying to get some talk with them, but found myself constantly interrupted by a pleasant but not very exciting little man who claimed acquaintance with me. At last I was obliged to capitulate, and he took me aside and reminded me that we had met a few months before at a lunch in London. The fact seemed unimportant, and I waited for him to go on. "I see you know a lot of these people," he said at last, "could you introduce me?" Of course I would have introduced him, I replied, only I had stupidly forgotten his name. "Oh, my name's H——" said my acquaintance apologetically, "I'm a member of Parliament; in fact, half of this place is in my constituency."

[1] Now, alas, dead; a belated victim of the Gallipoli campaign.

This particular man was well up to the average of the pre-war Liberal or present Labour M.P.s. In the Conservative Party there was just no place for him. He was not *ministrable*, and therefore his standing depended wholly on his extra-political activities, which were unimportant and not even particularly remunerative.

The Conservative Party machine is unique in this; that it is not composed of embryo politicians. It is composed almost exclusively of people who not only do not themselves wish to enter politics but have little respect for those who do.

The only time I have ever seen a speaker really savaged was at an influential Conservative discussion club in London, when the speaker was the Chairman of the Conservative Party himself. The powerful forces in the Conservative Party are not in politics. They are thus hard to bribe or to cajole. They are, however, equally hard to organise, because if disinterested they are also unambitious.

The control of the Conservative Party lies with democratically-organised assemblies of self-appointed autocrats. The local Conservative Associations are not elected bodies and they are responsible to no constituents. They can, however, send two representatives with voting powers to the party meetings. The anomalous character of the Conservative Party machine is its strength. Although an aggregate of caucuses of the worst possible type, it is not itself a caucus. It cannot be packed and it cannot be coerced. If only it could be made to think it would be a model assembly. No one takes any notice of the votes at the ordinary party conferences, but in a crisis the views of the Party are decisive, because they represent the people who pay the bills.

The difficulty in recent years in giving effect to the periodical dissatisfaction of the Conservative Party with its leadership has been the absence of an alternative leader to Mr. Baldwin. Leaders of parties are made, not born, but the

making of a leader requires a constructive ability not to be found even in unrepresentative assemblies. The sense of the party has been overwhelmingly opposed to Mr. Baldwin, first on his fiscal policy; then, and still, on his agricultural policy; always on his Indian policy; on his armament policy, till he abandoned it; and on his foreign policy since he abandoned it. But this dissatisfaction has not rested on any basis of political principle, and has been handicapped rather than energised by the character of its mouthpieces, particularly in the Press. The party has, be it noted, been right on every occasion. Industrial protection was a possible policy and has proved to be the right policy; a revenue tariff was a futility. Agricultural planning has failed, and genuine agricultural protection is the only possible restoration for what in the new world is the most essential of all our industries. In India, we have set up not a Constitution but an imposing ruin. Our disarmament policy has led the whole of Europe into an armaments race in which we must now belatedly join and thus undo the whole work of economic repair which was to be the task of the National Government. Our foreign policy has led us, by universal admission, to the point when war, if not a certainty, is at least an odds-on chance. But in every case the policy of "His Majesty's opposition" has been worse; a tariff for revenue, hitting the consumer and failing to protect the producer: the nationalisation of land; full Dominion status for India and an aggressive anti-Fascist policy without armaments. These are the politics of Bedlam. And so, in the absence of a ready-made alternative leader, the fear of "splitting the party" has prevailed over the voice of logic, and the dictates, in some cases, of mere common sense.

It requires, of course, some years of consistent misgovernment to create that simultaneous and spontaneous revolt of the rank and file which, even in favourable circumstances, can alone unseat the Conservative Party leader. Only Mr. Lloyd

George has achieved this. Mr. Baldwin's record is, on the other hand, adorned by a succession of spectacular successes. He is a magnificent defensive fighter. Three successive crises—not of his own creation—in 1926, in 1930 and in 1936—have found him not wanting. None the less, the years between have been far less fruitful of service to the country, and both in 1933 and 1936 (until the Constitutional crisis) Mr. Baldwin's position was easily vulnerable.

Politics are curious things. The Government's record, bad as it was in 1933, was infinitely better than it is to-day. Our prestige on the Continent was still fairly high. War was not thought of. We had balanced our Budget and even remitted a little taxation, but the opportunity, we all felt, had been there to apply some of those grand Conservative principles of which our leaders talked. Instead we were carrying out a little perfunctory repair work. We were doing nothing effective for unemployment; we were doing nothing to reduce the burden on industry. Urgent questions, as they seemed then and are to-day, of constitutional reform were not even asked, let alone answered. Above all, our League policy was already threatening to produce dead-sea fruit. The next election must surely end in disaster unless use was made of the unprecedented opportunity to inaugurate new and real reforms.

"The foundation of Conservative policy," I wrote in June, 1933, "is clear. It is to aim at an ever wider distribution of property, which is the only guarantee of liberty and the only foundation of character. Philosophically as well as politically this involves the relegation of economics to their proper subordinate place in the hierarchy of social sciences. We must no longer ask what pays best in cash or goods, but what pays best in amenities, in human values. We shall rebuild our agriculture, therefore, with the clear knowledge that our food may cost us more but that our people will be

happier on the land than on the dole. We shall restore our coal industry in the knowledge that any small inconveniences which the transition from oil to coal may cause will be repaid in the restoration of hope and an honourable livelihood to thousands of miners and their families.

"Again, we shall insist on such a measure of internal reflation as will release industry from the burden of artificially increased prior charges and an intolerable level of taxation. The present price level has no effect more socially disastrous than its effect on the smaller businesses. It is a direct incentive to amalgamation. It makes the poor poorer and the rich richer. By creating trusts and monopolies which cry out for control it is leading us directly to Socialism and the servile state.

"Finally, the Conservative Party must turn its back on the present parliamentary system in favour of a system which will restore the reality of self-government in the appropriate spheres and enable a strong central government to speak for the nation, and not merely for a class, on national issues. This means the adoption of functional and not regional representation. Thus alone can Labour be given a proper political status and a true equality. Industry must regain its liberty with the added dignity of an autonomous responsibility. For the problem of capital and labour there is no other honourable solution. A resolution in favour of the corporate state has already been passed by the Conservative Party. The time has come for a serious effort to give effect in the party programme to what is to-day only a pious resolution. Public opinion demands swift and vigorous movement towards new objectives. It sees the task of the state as the creation of conditions for independence, the secure ownership of property, and the corporate direction of industry by those engaged in it. It will, as a desperate alternative, accept Socialism, with its denial of status, its

doctrine of universal submission to the state. But public opinion, deeply mistrustful as it is of Socialism, will not for a moment accept the present system, with its denial alike of status, security and equality as an alternative."

That remains as true as when it was written. The intermission of a scare election fought on the League question and of a constitutional crisis have done nothing to alter the inevitable. These problems must be faced or we must accept Socialism. In 1933 an organisation of Conservative Independents was within measurable distance of getting some political recognition of the prevailing anxiety. Lord Lloyd was to lead a public campaign; there was even talk of a programme. The North of England, bitter over the complete and cynical breach of trust committed by the National Government in the matter of the distressed areas, was ready to renew its challenge to the party leadership, and with much authority, for was it not due largely to the initiative of Sir Alexander Leith that Mr. Baldwin had ever attained the leadership. Alas, for those dreams. To stampede a party machine you need a leader with a panacea, not a group with a programme. You need one clear simple issue with a political outcome possible to the politics of the moment. "Stand by the League" or "Leave the League": "Disarm" or "Rearm"; "Balance the Budget." We had no slogan, and when the India proposals provided one, it was not a good one, and it left Mr. Baldwin more firmly than ever in the saddle. All of which was a far greater pity than we ever guessed at the time. How infernally right we were! The reassertion of our freedom of action in foreign policy would then have been a guarantee of peace. To-day it is a desperate risk. Had we restored our agriculture four years ago, our balance of world trade would not be menaced, as it is to-day, by Continental policies aiming at self-sufficiency. Had we adopted a rational coal utilization policy, our naval supremacy would

not to-day be imperilled by the requirements of oil transport. And had these things not been so, there would have been no Franco-Soviet pact, no civil war in Spain and no armaments race in Europe. For lack of a little courage and a little determination before Germany was rearmed, we have lost everything that the National Government was formed to preserve. We have unbalanced the Budget; destroyed the League (except as an engine of war); created the conditions of a second economic crisis and left ourselves with no single effective battle cry against Socialism. As for unemployment, we have only mitigated it by rearmament and must face the inevitable deflationary crisis with the quite impossible burden of 1,600,000 men and women out of work at the peak of the "boom." But good prophecy is bad politics. We could have exchanged all our wisdom before the event for one "good cry" and even the appearance of a leader in the lower house.

We were not, of course, proposing to appeal primarily to the people. We decided that neither through the House of Commons nor through the electorate could salvation come, but through the party. The discontent already existed: we were to give it a point of focus. That was where we failed. We gave it so many points of focus that it was distributed instead of canalised. So also was the enthusiasm.

Lord Lloyd's position in the Conservative Party was a strong one at the time. He had a fine record as an administrator. His dismissal from Egypt by Mr. Arthur Henderson, acquiesced in by Mr. Baldwin, had aroused the disgust of the great majority of the party. But above all, he was the only man in the party who could rely on the support of the die-hards and who could yet command a following among the young men. His oratory was a legend rather than a reality, but legends are useful, and I have certainly myself heard him make one or two electrifying speeches, while one speech of his to the Oxford Conservative Association is still spoken of ten

years afterwards. But it was none of these things which marked him out as the spokesman of any movement designed to make Conservatism a living thing, but his manifest and unquestioned integrity. Far be it from me to say that he was the only honest Conservative politician; Conservative politicians are usually rich and therefore the level of political honesty among them is high. George Lloyd's honesty, however, was not political. Quite obviously the highest political offices had been open to him had he chosen to pursue them. Moreover, as a peer, he could be accused by no one of aiming himself at the party leadership. Yet this was the fatal error. We failed to realise that to give vitality to our campaign, it was essential that our spokesman should be regarded as aiming at the leadership.

People will tell you that we failed because Lord Lloyd is not a politician. Of course he is not. But any movement in the Conservative Party must to-day be anti-political. Its practical success will depend, not on the other politicians, but on the reaction of the anonymous dictators of the local associations, who dislike politics like the plague. The trouble is that they dislike politics so much that, except in the last desperate emergency, they leave them to the politicians. They had to be convinced that an emergency existed before they saddled themselves with a leaderless movement. As things were, there was an element of unreality which led us perilously near to anti-climax.

We had the goodwill of a minority of the prominent backbenchers in the House of Commons. We had a good Press. We had support in the constituencies. We organised a large and exceptionally influential audience for a dinner at which the challenge to the Government's policy was to be launched. We only forgot one thing, that the world of politics is not interested except in a crisis in challenges to policy but only in challenges to politicians. The only one among us who did

realise this was George Lloyd himself, but his realisation was subconscious.

I shall not easily forget the night of that dinner at the Savoy, an immense audience for an occasion of that kind. We had foolishly refused to break our rule and ask women; if we had, the audience would have been six or seven hundred. As it was, it was nearly 350, which, as Beachcomber would say, "must be a record." There was enough anti-political dynamite in that room to have unseated half a dozen leaders. It was, potentially, a partisan occasion, but Lloyd, with characteristic courage, chose to talk national politics. His speech had a good reception from the Press, but he never delivered it. For a speech you must have an audience. Every Englishman begins his favourite penance of listening to a speech by wondering why he is there. On this ill-fated occasion, the wonder persisted to the end. "This audience is stone cold," Lord Carson remarked to me, as he sat down after his preliminary speech. The reason was simple, if shattering to the complacency of political writers. The audience consisted of devoted subscribers of the *English Review* who had never read a line of what had been written there. Conservative politicians never read. Business men never read. Writers never read. Reading is the occupation of the leisured or the frustrated, and there were few of either in this audience. Great speeches can only be made without effort to people who think writers important, words deeds, and politicians clever. There were not half a dozen people in that audience who thought anything of the kind. The only trump card for an audience of this kind is loyalty; the more we are together the more comfortable we shall be, and we had no one to put forward as the recipient of their loyalty. We couldn't even offer a hint that any of us would ever meet the others again. We had brought them there just, it seemed, to make them feel uncomfortable. They certainly returned the compliment. After the dinner, I had a drink with three friends, none

of them active politicians. Two had decided to become Fascists; the third was, by ten o'clock, a convinced Communist, the audience had certainly been charged with potential dynamite, but it had only succeeded in disintegrating itself.

There is, so Bevan Wyndham Lewis tells me, something in the very appearance of a Conservative audience which is offensive to writers, even if they are Conservative writers. What is offensive, if one is minded to be offended, is simply this. Conservative audiences are not impressed by even the wittiest journalists. They have no more desire to lunch with a journalist than with their tailor. When I tell my political friends that I write they become uneasy. When I say that I only write in the evenings because I have to go to the City every day, they are reassured, and even sometimes pay me the compliment of listening to me. The same fundamental disharmony between art and letters and the practical Englishman are, at this moment, working havoc in the Fascist movement. It will in due course lead to a split in the Labour movement; the apostles of the United Front are fatally divided, not by views but by class and occupation, from the stalwarts of the Trade Union Movement, who get on better, man for man, with Conservative business men than with the horn-spectacled intelligentsia.

Of course Disraeli's remark is true. The "practical man" is the man who repeats the mistakes of his grandfather. It is George Lloyd's achievement to have been the only Conservative leader to see where the practical men were leading us. He saw this in the face of a good many handicaps to clear vision. He has spent most of his life, and almost all his political life, outside England, and, in any case, it is hard to study social and industrial problems from Portman Square. As witness this dialogue, delightful in its remoteness from the dust and the heat,

MYSELF (*helping myself to a whisky and soda, and seeing an unfamiliar-looking soda-water bottle*): "Do you make this soda-water yourself?

LLOYD: Yes, it's a new machine. You ought to get one.

MYSELF: No use to me, I'm afraid. I've got no one to look after that kind of thing.

LLOYD: But it's perfectly simple: any butler can do it.

Yet for all his detachment, and very delightful that detachment was, George Lloyd worked, and to-day works, far harder at politics than any of us. Nothing was too much trouble if the cause seemed worth while. His political handicap is that to be successful you must consider not the cause but the effect of advocating it. You cannot dispense with a little cynicism.

And yet, as I write this, I can hear George Lloyd disagreeing hotly. As witness India. I felt it a calamity, and said so, that he should spend his energy for so many years on the quixotic India Defence agitation. India was easy money, compared with the *English Review* programme, when it came to splitting the Conservative politicians. The Empire provided a slogan, and its spokesmen were pro-consuls, Calcutta merchants, soldiers and retired officials, and their language such as members of Conservative Associations could understand, but the movement was bound to fail, because it meant nothing to the youth of the party, who want a social policy. In the *English Review* days we had only to capture a hundred notabilities to get the whole of the youth behind us. The India Defence League had more than half the notabilities of the party, but no one wanted a government of retired Field-Marshals. Moreover, there is a personal factor. The defeat of the India agitation meant the defeat of the agitators. You can agitate for a programme for twenty years without losing prestige. You cannot agitate against a bill and return to politics with undimmed prestige

when that bill is passed. There is no place for the Quixotic in public life, any more than there should be for personal friendships. The power of the independent Conservatives has waned since the India agitation. The government has got more complacent, and its personnel (with one notable exception), more elaborately idle. And that is to the bad, for in consequence, the most vital of the political issues of our time went by default. England tied herself to the League of Nations and watched with uncomprehending eyes Europe organising itself for war. Only when we sent our ramshackle and somnambulist Armada into the Mediterranean in 1935, and heard the world's subdued but unmistakable titter did we wake up, too late, from our illusions.

It was in 1933, in a paper read at Chatham House, that I launched the first attack on the League system heard within those progressive walls. Here, too, the issue still lies open, but as with social and economic reconstruction, Baldwinism, though it took a count of nine, has won the first round. We are still without a Conservative social policy; we are still determined not to desist from the attempt to impose upon the rest of Europe and Asia the dictates of a junta of professional politicians sitting at Geneva. In both matters Mr. Baldwin has had the warm support of the friends of revolution at home and abroad. In both matters the mass of the people are lukewarm, knowing all too well that the end of these things must be communism at home and war abroad, but seeing nowhere to turn for leadership in any contrary direction.

Did we, in sporting jargon, make our effort too soon? That we have shaken the undeserved monopoly of prestige enjoyed since the '90's by the intellectuals of the Left is certain. Low may make his Blimps fatter and fatter and get more hysterical every day about their follies, but they deceive only the writers, no longer even the readers, of the *New Statesmen*. The suggestion that the only weapon of the opponents of Marxian

materialism—that shoddy relic of the Victorian age—is castor oil is no longer believed to-day. But the faith that is in the masses of the people in the things that are lasting, the hatred of tyranny, the fear of slavery, the respect for religion, and the desire to live their own lives fortified by the reality of economic independence, this faith finds no defenders in the machine politics of the machine age. That is why all over Europe simple and peace-loving men are turning round and destroying the political machines. That, of course, is what we should have set out to do to the Conservative machine in 1933, but I fancy, as I say, that we made our effort four years too soon.

Yet one thing I can give as the clear lesson of my miscellaneous political experiences. No easier than the Spanish will the British people be racketeered into Communism (under whatever name), let alone into a war to impose Communism on Central Europe. We shall either see the defence of liberty and peace taken over by a re-vitalised Conservative Party, or see the slow fusion of that party into the Communist forces, while a new party gathers to fight the inevitable challenge of the revolutionary forces when they come out into the open. Sooner or later, the battle will be joined, and it will be fought to a finish. There is no evidence discoverable in the records of Moscow which leads me to suppose that the fight will be bloodless.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE LAST CRUSADE

I WAS in Louisville, Kentucky, when the opening moves in the Italian crisis were made. Being in a free country, I learned day by day of the movements of our navy and our army. Special editions of the *Times* and the *Courier-Journal* kept us informed of the hourly developments. Simple-minded and honourable people in these islands sometimes wonder why our own view of our intervention in the Italian quarrel with Abyssinia is not shared by the rest of the world. The world did not share the British public's view of our intervention because the world knew, not day by day but hour by hour, of British governmental activities which were for a long time kept secret from the British people. In the eyes of the world we manifestly attempted to coerce the Italian government by the armed forces whose movements we kept secret from our own people, to whom we talked only of economic sanctions and the covenants of the League. We had vital interests in the Mediterranean and the world did not reach the conclusion that our dramatic gestures were in any way disinterested. What they did feel, and say, was to the contrary. In defence of our vital interests we were deliberately doing the very thing which the League was formed to prevent—we were mobilizing and concentrating our forces at strategic points and provoking, inevitably, a counter-mobilization, just precisely as the Russians and the Austrians had done in July, 1914. This might, the commonsensical burghers of Louisville agreed, be sound sense, but it did not savour of the new but of the old diplomacy, and our passionate invocations of the letter and spirit of the

Covenant (which were all our own people heard) fell, in Kentucky at anyrate, on ears deaf as a post.

No wonder that I was called, at twenty-four hours' notice, to explain to the citizens of Louisville the real nature of the crisis. I found myself, in a sense, an official spokesman, for I had been for some time the London correspondent of the famous *Courier-Journal.* Happily in this case I did not have to rely on London for my news of what was happening. I was able, however, to add something to the news in the American press, for I knew before I left London of the threat delivered by Lord Cecil to keep the Peace Ballot organisation in being until the General Election at the end of the year. I was also able to say, to the great relief of my audience, that, if our bluff failed, we should not apply military sanctions against Italy because public opinion would not tolerate it. The noise we were making was a necessary prelude to the election. The noise Mussolini was making was a necessary reply to the strident, if amateurish, performance of our own orchestra of war. Our statesmen had in fact reached that fatal climacteric in the life of politicians when they had to appear to put their perorations into practice. But we should, in fact, only fight in defence of our own interests, which we could easily protect. I refrained from further prophecy but I left the citizens of Louisville, I hope, with a heightened appreciation of our government's intelligence. It was not, of course, possible to defend their morality. The whole world knew that we had no intention of giving up a square yard of our war-conquests, let alone of our pre-war Empire. They also knew that we, the French and the Spanish had agreed to give Italy a free hand in Abyssinia as long ago as 1907 and repeatedly since. I sometimes wonder if the British Foreign Office remembers that there is one signatory to the engagements of Algeciras who is still alive and perfectly informed of the pledges there given to Italy, without which the settlement would never have been reached or peace preserved.

The world, even without knowing all, assumed, and with perfect justice, that the pledges of the past and the policy of the future could have been reconciled by a decision of the League to give Italy the mandate for Abyssinia. Herbert Fisher suggested to me when I got back that Italy could, in fact, have had almost anything she wanted if she had asked for it in a nice Genevan manner. But he, like Mussolini, could only guess, and Mussolini guessed otherwise. Whether this would have proved so we shall never know, but we do know that Mussolini had, at the start, every intention of occupying certain provinces of Abyssinia, but no intention of conquering the whole of Abyssinia by military force, and that he was forced into his audacious *coup de main* solely by the League. Unfortunately we had been told by the bankers, with the utmost assurance, that Italy would collapse economically under an economic boycott and the strain of a long campaign, and we had been told by the military experts that the campaign in Abyssinia would be of exceptional length. English military experts are like English doctors. They surrender their patients' lives with grave courtesy. They face vicarious defeat unflinchingly, when the text-books require it. But they invariably forget the factors which tend to keep less fortunate foreigners alive—the will of the patient and the skill of the doctor. Our soldiers forgot the irrepressible ragtime spirit of the Italian black-shirts and the military skill of General Badoglio. Abyssinia paid dearly for their forgetfulness.

It was indeed, and literally, what my friend General Fuller has called it: "The First of the League Wars." It is, however, quite premature to call it a defeat for the League. Italy was forced into a conquest most of which she certainly intended, but which she intended to take the form of a gradual and painless penetration. As things are, her sudden conquest will seriously test her at her weakest point—her administrative capacity. The great empires of the past made their mistakes,

committed their crimes if you will, before the days of wireless telegraphy, compulsory education and universal suffrage. It is more than doubtful if the incalculable benefits which we have conferred on the Indian peoples in the last 180 years would have been possible if our task had been begun under modern conditions. It is almost certain that India would have had, like China since 1910, to sustain on her own shoulders the agonising burden of years of anarchy, pillage and corruption, ending in the intervention not of a European but of an Asiatic power. It is not yet certain that Italy will be able even to begin her task of introducing order and civilised government into Abyssinia. She has challenged simultaneously the tired but resolute defenders of the *status quo* and the tireless apostles of revolution. Unless the forces of order unite, there is nothing whatever that can save Europe from destruction, and in that event the slave system of which Abyssinia was the last example will be the fate of us all.

Order, we are told, is an empty word, covering the breaking of treaties, the gassing of defenceless tribes and the massacre of unnamed men in the streets of Addis Ababa. There is enough truth in this gibe to deceive very young children or very elderly politicians. The reality is very different. The spread of public disorder, the weakening of the essential organs of government everywhere, is the cardinal aim of the forces of world-revolution. It was not the fate of Abyssinia but the fate of the Italian regime that was staked at Geneva. That regime could not be, as was Spain, attacked from within. It had to be attacked from without. Italy was forced with great skill from one untenable position to another till no alternative remained but a campaign which every military and economic expert in Europe believed to be impossible, in the conditions laid down by the war-makers at Geneva. Evil as the results were, they would have been far worse in any other eventuality. The defeat of Italy by Abyssinia would have

brought the structure of world order in Africa and in Asia down in ruins and would have plunged Italy into civil war. A situation was deliberately allowed to grow up which could not be adjusted, in its final form, without the gravest consequences, but of all the possible consequences which might have resulted, the end of the barbarous and treacherous Amharic empire was perhaps the least evil. It was indeed in itself, if we could disregard the manner of its accomplishment, an unmitigated good. Yet it marked, as it was intended to mark, the beginning of the end of public order in Europe, and it was not long before the same sinister forces which had tried to engineer the ruin of Italy (while getting us to pay the bill) saw their opportunity in the prevailing disorder to strike another blow on soil even more carefully prepared.

The technique of the Revolution in Europe to-day is not understood in this country. Yet it is quite simple. You create *disorder and challenge decent and Christian people to put it* down. If they do not put it down they lose power; if they do, you revolt, on paper and on the æther, against their atrocious savagery. By these tactics you can create not merely an incorrect impression but an impression exactly and mathematically opposite to the truth. The forces of disorder become "the people struggling to be free," and the people's government becomes a conspiracy of ruthless adventurers sustained in power by force alone.

The Spanish Liberal rebellion of 1931, and the Spanish Communist Rebellion of 1933 and the Spanish Communist Revolution of 1936 all followed this technique. Like every one else I had followed the chequered course of events in Spain since the war with a very half-hearted interest, but unlike the majority of my fellow-countrymen I was aroused from my indifference by the fall of the Monarchy.

I have been since my childhood an inveterate reader of newspapers. Modern newspapers are not meant to be read,

but only to be looked at. The assumption is that you have to say a thing twenty times before any one pays any attention to it. News, in other words, has to be plugged, like the key-tunes of a musical show. My fellow-journalists, I am sure, know their business, but there is at least one person who by some curious freak is capable of reading a thing once and still remembering it. And I remembered the figures given in *The Times* of the overwhelming Monarchist victory at the municipal elections on April 12th, 1931. These figures, which were correct, gave over 22,000 seats to the Monarchists and only 6,000 to the Republicans. The figures appeared as an unimportant item in the news. They were followed the next day by the news of the fall of the Monarchy as the result of a popular victory at the polls. The figures of the municipal elections did not reappear.

It would not be fair to talk of deception. The Monarchy had actually fallen, and, amid considerable applause, the Republic had taken its place. Nevertheless there was, from the very start, something strangely disingenuous about this great popular victory and its reception in this country. Liberalism was in eclipse all over Europe; but here at last was the long-awaited Liberal revival. That was good enough for the English press. It was a curious kind of Liberalism which erected an anti-Catholic republic on the base of a Catholic monarchist victory. It was a still more curious Liberal revival which turned itself, in May, 1931, to the wholesale destruction of churches and convents, and a yet more curious Liberal revival which produced such a result as that of the elections of June, 1931, when only one royalist deputy was returned from the country which two months before had returned 22,000 royalist councillors out of 28,000.

These popular facts left in my mind an impression of fraud and hypocrisy which was confirmed by the farce of the new and decidedly liberal constitution, to which was appended a clause

incorporating in its provisions the "law for the defence of the Republic," which cancelled every one of the constitution's Liberal provisions, by giving the government the power to imprison without trial, suspend newspapers, appropriate property, forbid public assemblies and dismiss civil servants at will, and in every case without any redress at law. This was political racketeering, but the Liberal press, for so long a partner in the systematic betrayal of Liberal principles, kept silence.

The picture we were invited to look at was drawn in simple outlines. The reactionary Monarchy had been swept away by popular vote. The property of the wicked Jesuits had been seized and a Liberal constitution had inaugurated an era of progress. And yet, although in no single particular did the picture convey truth, there was one factor which might explain everything. For twenty years King Alfonso had been politically the most powerful king in Europe. He had also been much in the news, and the news was of the kind that indicated an attractive personality rather than a keen and responsible intelligence. Perhaps it is here that we had to look for the explanation of what is otherwise inexplicable; for the justification of what is otherwise unjustifiable. There were fantastic stories in circulation of the king's great wealth, made out of government contracts, and of his personal responsibility for the disasters of the first Morocco campaign. When, therefore, in the autumn of 1931, I was asked to meet the king, who had expressed a wish to meet some English writers and editors, I was particularly grateful for the opportunity.

I came away from that meeting profoundly disquieted, and I have not yet found any answer to the doubts there raised in my mind. An unmistakably Habsburg in physical type as Alba is unmistakably Stewart—and to see the two together is a curious study in historical psychology—King Alfonso is yet

pure 20th century Bourbon, a paradox if ever there was one. He has learned everything there is to know of the problems of modern government. He has, or had then, the fullest and most detailed statistics of education, illiteracy, public health, foreign trade and finance at his finger-tips. He had no need for the English cabinet minister's characteristic ability to pick up a subject as the discussion proceeds. He is not content with the flashing generalisation, so dear to Mr. Winston Churchill, still less with the nonchalant assumption of an interested but reticent omniscience which was the secret of Colonel House's curiously sterile influence. But King Alfonso remains a Bourbon—a centraliser by temperament. By virtue of abilities very far beyond the ordinary and brought to fruition by a vast experience of government in times of social change, he could walk into the Cabinet of any country in Europe. He would be most at home in a coalition government, where he would not, like Mr. Baldwin, be unable to apply his knowledge for lack of energy, or, like Mr. Lloyd George, be unable to apply his energy for lack of knowledge. For King Alfonso, if a centraliser by temperament, is a democratic politician by taste. He could have kept his throne if he had been willing to shed blood, but it is the game of politics not the exercise of power which fascinates him. Had there been among the Spanish political classes in 1931 any single group with a conscientious desire to play out the political game under the Constitution, to carry on the task, already well begun, of turning Spain into a new and efficient twentieth-century state, there would have been, it was as clear as daylight, no revolution, no republic, and no civil war.

I speak of what I know, by the accident of my personal experience. It is impossible for any one with a Treasury training to discuss such matters as education or health administration, vital or trade statistics, without recognising real knowledge when he comes across it. On questions of policy

men with the widest experience and the greatest ability may be fools, but we were not on this occasion, when we talked (or rather, listened mostly) for a good four hours, talking of policy. We were talking of the conditions in Spain, her resources and her capacity for utilising and developing them, a capacity denied her by her insistence on sacrificing social and economic progress to a political revolution. We did not know then how this thesis was to be proved up to the hilt by the same refusal of the revolutionary parties to co-operate with the moderate republicans after the election of November, 1933. But I, at any rate, heard enough to convince me then of the absolute truth of the King's view, that he had been deliberately faced by a minority with the threat of civil war, just precisely as the Church had been attacked two months later on the charge of creating an organised clerical opposition to the new Republic. Create disorder, and then demand the world's indignation against the victims when they rebel; that is the revolutionary technique.

The King gave us his views of his own part with characteristic frankness. He should have ended the rule of General Primo de Rivera earlier and appealed to the country with a constitutional government of his own choosing for a mandate to carry on the great work of the dictatorship through the machinery of the constitution. The King, of course, was right in this view, but the ultimate result would have been the same. There is no answer to the modern technique of revolution, except war.

The disquiet that I felt as a result of what I had learnt on this particular evening did not arise from this secular certainty. They that take the sword will perish by the sword. That truth is implicit in the nature of men and things, and it is as true of Spanish politicians as of the professors at Geneva. My doubts were on a different point, much more relevant to our own problems, as I guessed then and know to-day. The only

unknown factor in the Spanish problem, as I had posed it to myself, was the personality and ability of the King. This factor I now know, but it provided no solution to the problem. In fact, there was no solution to the problem in terms agreeable to complacent constitutional democrats. There was no riddle; there was only a racket. The simplest thing in the world, but the hardest for complacent Englishmen to accept. The burning of the churches was part, so I learned the other day, of a bargain between the republican authorities and the Communist party. I learned this from a friend who had been in prison, under the Republic, with the Communist who had been entrusted with the negotiations and who had been in the office of the Minister of the Interior when the order had been given for the police on the afternoon in question to be confined to their barracks. It sounds, to English ears, an improbable story, but when I was in Malaga, a few weeks ago, and spoke to the British consul about the outrages which had occurred there, he put a curious question to me. "How do you account," he said, "for the fact that every house burnt in Malaga was burnt on one day and that after that no more were burnt?" The answer was obvious. Here too, the local Communists had made their bargain with the so-called local administration. The same technique had been applied here in 1935, as had been applied to the churches in 1931 all over Spain. The police simply disappeared for a whole day. The next day they reappeared as if nothing had happened.

But the details of the racket were in 1931 unknown to me, unknown indeed to every one. What was disquieting was the studied servility of the English to the new regime, the ease with which a racket could be worked, not in Spain, where the press, of course, was no longer free under the new "liberal" regime, but in England. Nothing that was to happen in the next six years removed my disquiet.

First and foremost, there was the personality of the King.

No man is perfect and no great man claims to be, but our journalists, who had never failed to record King Alfonso's visits to San Sebastian or his exploits at polo, remained for years completely silent about his real character. Why?

Gilbert Chesterton in his autobiography records his own first intimation of political sanity as occurring when he went to a political meeting at a club and saw, in the distance, an old man with a beard mumbling inaudibly from a voluminous and almost interminable piece of somebody else's manuscript, while the usual crowd of quidnuncs—candidates, journalists, Tapers and Tadpoles—gave intermittent attention between frequent visits to the bar. Next day, Chesterton opened his paper and read a startling headline:

LORD SPENCER UNFURLS THE BANNER.

The soul of the last of the knights-errant was naturally thrilled. Here, at last, he thought, had his dreams come true; perhaps the banner had even been unfurled on Campden Hill. Then, with a feeling of unappeasable disillusion, he discovered that this noble allegory had been used in impudent reference to the dreary farce which he had attended the day before.

I had the same feeling when I realised that in all the thousands of paragraphs which I had read about King Alfonso, there had been not one word of the essential truth. Can democracy survive this kind of thing?

And there was another side to the medal. When I asked the King about two or three of the personnel of the new government which was being lauded to the skies by the *Daily News* and the *Manchester Guardian*, I had asked not as to their international quality, but as to their personal standing—were they, for instance, well-known Liberals of the type of Lord Crewe or Mr. Runciman or Mr. Lloyd George, or were they men of a different stamp? "I see what you mean," the King had replied. "The answer to that," he said, with his dangerously

uneasy smile, "is quite simple. The men you mention were very well known indeed—to the police."

I am not, like my friend Charles Petrie, an ardent monarchist. The Right Divine of Kings to govern wrong has never appealed to me as a sound principle. If I had to lecture on political theory I should be tempted to find in the principle of the Adoptive Empire a better method of combining the principle of authority with the practice of decent government than is afforded by the hereditary principle. It was not the spectacle of a Spanish king exiled from Spain which moved me to indignation, but that of the English people exiled from truth on the Spanish question. We had chosen to throw ourselves, and with nothing more effective in our hands than a few fountain pens and innumerable scraps of paper, into the turbulent scene of European politics. What hope was there that we should emerge without disaster to ourselves and the world if we had no will to know the truth, no determination to base our policy on the facts and no ability even to make the facts public?

The new regime in Spain was founded on a lie and maintained, as all regimes so founded must be, by ruthless and cynical fraud and force. The merest schoolboy knowledge of history should have taught us that Spain in chaos means war in Europe. And chaos was already apparent and must continue. But that was only half the iniquity. We had fought our own war, so we had been told in sonorous prose from the Treasury bench "that generations to come might live out their lives in freedom and justice and honour." The new régime in Spain was the denial of all three. Was this really the end of our post-war Utopia; was this new Europe to which men of light and leading were giving their blessing so unctuously a thing to be tolerated?

It seems to me then, and how damnably right I have been proved, that the future of religion and freedom, the future of

mere decency, for that matter, in Europe was bound up simply with the question whether this thing was to be tolerated or no. It is no use recalling men to Christ in London and burning those who have heard Him call in Spain. Christ is everywhere or nowhere. He must be served or rejected. What would Charles Dickens and my own great-grandfather, the pioneers of Liberal journalism in this country, have said of the oily and highly-placed blasphemers who see in the murder of priests and nuns and the organisation of sacrilege no occasion for even the most formal protest? The betrayal of Liberal idealism began with the toleration of the Moscow racketeers. But it was distance, perhaps, which lent that peculiar enchantment, and, in any case, the government which they replaced was nearly as bad as they. Here in Spain was something self-evidently different. This was the cold-blooded and cynical destruction of a high civilisation, not at the time of its exhaustion but at the time of, and in order to prevent, its renascence.

One thing came home to me early in our efforts to tell the truth, and that was the iniquity of our surrender, not to the doctrines but to the practical success of the Moscow regime. How wise, how fair-minded, how English, to receive the envoys of Moscow, to shake them cordially by the hand and agree to differ on a few small matters of internal policy. "Is it nothing to you, ye that pass by?" And the answer goes up self-righteously from every editorial office in Fleet Street that it is precisely nothing at all. It was against that fundamental apostasy which we had to make our way. Editors were willing enough to listen. They would even on occasion print a few facts. But no "propaganda."

Yet we scored a tactical victory with our book on *The Spanish Republic*, the fruit of an active collaboration between Luis Bolin, the Marqués del Moral and myself, working on the foundations of a brilliant pamphlet by Calvo Sotelo. This book, published in 1933, was read and never answered. It was

even reviewed, and without the more grotesque absurdities which characterised the reviews of the first Official Report of the Nationalist Government on the Communist Atrocities, when one reviewer solemnly complained of the absence of any reference to the atrocities which the Nationalist Government must itself have committed and another deplored the "tone of bitterness" with which the murders of hundreds of men, women and children were described.

It was on the initiative of Sir Charles Petrie that we had formed our small committee to study and get full reports of Spanish affairs. The energising factor on this committee was the Marqués del Moral, whose remarkable and buoyant personality and overflowing hospitality kept our small group in being and in remarkable amity over a number of years. It is a sobering reflection on the possibility of a wise foreign policy under modern conditions that such an organisation should have been necessary if we were to obtain even the barest minimum of information as to what was happening in a European country only twenty-four hours distant from London. Yet the determination to give the new regime a fair chance, as it was phrased, made it so, and for me it was fortunate for it enabled me to meet many men with a European outlook on contemporary problems which one misses in English political circles. It is, indeed, a paradox that the survival in Spain of so much of the old international Christian tradition should have been to some extent responsible for her ruin at the hands of the new so-called internationalists. Men so different from each other as the King of Spain himself and the Duke of Alba, Ramiro de Maeztu, Antonio Goicocchea, Calvo Sotelo (whom personally I never met), de la Cierva, the Marqués Merry del Val, to name only a few of those who advised us and with whom we corresponded, are alike in this, that they have an outlook on affairs which extends far beyond their own circle and generation. They are men of the world,

not in our English sense, which would merely mean that they were very much at home in the smoking-room of a commercial hotel, but in the sense in which the phrase was used before the curse of a selfish and provincial nationalism had destroyed the common culture of Europe. The extent of this destruction is even to-day not fully realised by Spaniards. They still cannot realise that the English attitude to the present Spanish crisis is the result of a shattering and stupendous ignorance, exploited, of course, by a minority of unscrupulous men. "England," wrote Luis Bolin to me the other day, "is separated from us by the Reformation." Alas, it is not as simple as all that. It is not Protestantism, but the crude and naïve materialism misbegotten of the Darwin hypothesis which separates us from the European tradition. Three years ago, a columnist in an English national daily, commenting on the word Christmas, found himself able (despite the absence of any reference in Mr. Gollancz's *Children's Outline of Knowledge*) to account for the first syllable in the extraordinary word, but added that the origin of the word "mas" was "lost in the mists of antiquity." Every night, at meetings held by the Left-wing fanatics who support the Valencia Government, the vast wealth of the Church in Spain is continuously denounced. Many of the denouncers must know the facts, but they could not go on doing it if they were not able to rely implicitly on their audiences' ignorance of the truth, which is that the lands and property of the Church in Spain were confiscated in 1835, and have never been restored, and that the meagre pittance which the State paid to the clergy was withdrawn altogether in 1931, while the property acquired by the religious orders was confiscated in 1932. Nor do the Spaniards realise that the basic truth that European civilisation stands or falls with the Church is not only unknown to Englishmen, but when stated, is unintelligible to them. The Englishman's religion has for generations been a muddled variety of humanitarian positivism

which has had the direst possible effects on his powers of continuous thought. It is not malice, or fear, but sheer ignorance which has led us to-day to the point where we are almost openly allied with revolutionary Communism for a war of aggression against Christianity and the rights of man. Even the most obvious signs of disaster are pooh-poohed with arguments which would shame a child of ten. People read the population statistics and when they are told what these mean—which is nothing less than the end of our power and dominion and prosperity—they reply that just as the prophecies of a huge increase of population in the last century were falsified, so prophecies based on these present statistics will be, forgetting that whereas the children necessary to fulfil the first prophecy were only expected to be born, those necessary to prevent the fulfilment of the second have already not been born, and cannot get born retrospectively.

These observations on the eccentricities of our educated classes are strictly relevant to the story of my Spanish adventures. For, as the Spanish tragedy progressed, it became obvious that a conflict was being prepared in that unfortunate country which would, in one sense at least, be decisive for Europe. The apostles of militant Communism meant to establish control of the West as of the East, and if they succeeded before we were awake, that was the end. There, in Spain, were the necessary bases in the Mediterranean for the second and last of the League Wars, the war against Central Europe, the war for revolution, the war to end the peace.

And in the hope of such an issue the propagandists of revolution were now hard at work. When the Jesuits were expelled and their property confiscated they announced a victory over ignorance and obscurantism. What actually happened, in a country desperately short of schools (a shortage for which the politicians were solely responsible, for since 1863 Spain has been under the control of democratically elected politicians)

was that six universities, twenty public schools, two observatories, a Leper colony and ten seminaries, were closed. When the Communist rising of 1933 took place, a rising equipped with arms issued from the government arsenals by the defeated Prime Minister before his resignation—another piece of Gladstonian liberalism—the *Daily Herald* announced an attempted Fascist coup by Gil Robles. When I wrote to the editor pointing out that Senor Gil Robles was not a Fascist, but the head of the Catholic Constitutional Party—a fact ascertainable from any reference book and as indisputable as the political complexion of Mr. Baldwin or M. Blum—the Editor wrote back suavely thanking me for my information, which he was trying to verify from his correspondents at Madrid. The falsification of news is a new and an evil thing in English public life, and it is hardly less evil if we take the almost quixotically charitable view that it is due to genuine ignorance.

It is interesting to recall that the pretext given for the 1933 rising in Spain—where of course the lie about Gil Robles could not be told—was the inclusion, following the Right victory at the polls, of three Catholic ministers in the Cabinet. The pretext was self-evidently a bad one, and the revolt was not in fact, meant to succeed. It was meant to place on the government the dilemma of punishing the ringleaders or of showing weakness by letting them off. The government let them off, including in their clemency Largo Caballero and Azaña. Thus they committed political suicide, for they were condemned by world opinion for their brutality in suppressing the rising—as a result of a campaign of lies at that time without precedent in the liberal press of all countries—while their ultimate clemency left the ringleaders free to profit from the indignation which their alleged execution had aroused. From that moment the cause of the centre party was lost in Spain, just as it had been in Germany when they feared to

execute Herr Hitler. "When did you first know," Lord Lloyd asked the Fuehrer, "that you would succeed?" "When I found that they were afraid to kill me," was Hitler's reply. And so with the Spanish revolutionaries, but only in so far as their hopes went. The fulfilment was to be far otherwise.

For this, thanks are primarily due to Josè Antonio Primo de Rivera. For Largo Caballero had forgotten that politics, like patriotism, is not enough. And so in the land where the counter-Revolution started, the Last Crusade began.

It began, as crusades must, with the defeat of the constitutional parties of the Right and the Centre in the elections of January, 1936. It was not a shattering defeat, but it deprived those parties sworn to constitutional methods of a constitutional right to govern. It placed on the parties of the Left, by the same argument, an indefeasible obligation to govern. Instead, there began a campaign of arson, murder and sacrilege conducted without the least attempt at government interference. The first President of the Republic had been dismissed, the first Prime Minister had been side-tracked into the Presidency. The decks were thus cleared, but as the plot became more obvious so the challenge grew. During the six months from February to July, 1936, there were:

	From Feb. 16th until June 15th inclusive	*Period of May 13th to June 15th*
Churches completely destroyed	160	36
Attacks on churches, shrines, fires put out, destruction and assaults ..	251	34
Persons killed	269	65
Persons wounded	1,287	230
Personal attacks frustrated	215	46
Robberies with violence	138	24
Attempts at robbery with violence ..	23	
Private and political centres destroyed ..	69	9

Private and political centres attacked ..	312	
General strikes	113	79
Partial strikes	228	92
Newspaper offices completely destroyed	10	
Attacks on newspapers, attempted assault and destruction	33	
Bomb outrages	146	47
Unexploded bombs collected	78	
Forced closings		7

Spain during the fateful months which followed the 1936 elections was saved by Primo de Rivera's Spanish Phalanx. There were, it is said, only 20,000 of them. But it was enough. I learned something of their courage and virtue at first hand.

I was sitting in my office one morning when I was rung up by Luis Bolin. Would I see a friend of his who was in London? I would and did.

I remember the day well. It was near midsummer of last year, and I was trying to sell books and wondering greatly whether it was really worth while. When Luis Bolin's friend came in, I was pleasantly relieved. I anticipated a proposal to publish a pamphlet, the kind of heroic gesture appropriate to amateur politicians at midsummer in Mr. Baldwin's England.

The Spanish are the most delightful because the most surprising of peoples. It would be supremely comic, if it were not for the encyclopædic ignorance which makes the lie plausible, to hear people say that they are even potential Fascists. They will never be Fascists because they are God's last, and therefore effective and sufficient, protest against the machine age. My new friend sat down as a man sits down when he has just dismounted after a long ride. He had, he told me, come on a bus, but that was clearly a terrestrial

illusion. He had ridden across the sunburnt yellow plains of the Tagus straight into my room.

"Well," he said, taking a good look at me and I at him (he was wondering, I could see, whether I was real), "I won't waste your time. Bolin tells me that you're the only man in London who can help me. I want fifty machine guns and half a million rounds of S.A. ammunition."

I said, as casually as I knew how, that I saw no difficulty about that. My new friend expressed neither surprise nor gratitude. It was, I gathered, the least that he had expected. And, having disposed of this trifling business of question and answer, he went on to tell me all about it. It was, he put it to me, raising his voice ever so slightly to drown the hooting of paper merchants and printers' vans outside, a question of saving a nation's soul. I said that I understood that such a necessity might easily arise. And then, for ten minutes, I listened to the realities of politics. The stories of murder, outrage and sacrilege are familiar enough to me to-day; I have heard so many of them at first hand. The last three nights I dined in Spain, I found myself in each case sitting at table with women whose husbands had been murdered within the last six months. And these were all chance encounters. But that was not in Fleet Street, and the world in those days was younger. Yet I believed everything that I heard because of the manner of man who talked to me, and the way in which our conversation had begun. After a time I interrupted him. "You want these arms to kill the murderers?"

"No!" His indignation rang through the room. "We need them so that our people will have the courage to go on being murdered. As long as we are fighting for them, they will not give in, but if we stop—well, it will be Russia over again. And," he added, "Spain is not Russia. If Spain goes . . ."

"And how about payment?" I asked. Obviously we were in accord on every point, so the discussion reverted, as it

always does in Spain (and of course we were in Spain; such a discussion could not be going on in Fetter Lane), to the severely practical without any apologies. Then we shook hands. "I'll let Bolin know what I can do," I said, and then I woke up and found myself on the steps of my office saying good-bye to a stranger.

Fifty machine guns, or was it five hundred? Or five hundred thousand? I went back to my desk and consulted my blotting paper. Yes! It had all been real! There it was in my execrable scrawl, as clear to me (but I hoped to no one else) as daylight—"50 M.G.—Hotchkiss preferred—and ½ million S.A.A."

Then my door opened, and my ever-faithful colleague, P. V. Cave, put his head in. "Well, did you sell him anything?" he asked cheerily. "I think so," I answered dubiously. "Don't you *know*?" asked Cave, a trifle indignantly; he is always a bit suspicious of my commercial acumen. I confessed that I did not. It was a Spaniard, I added, by way of excuse. And Cave brightened. "Oh, I thought it was an American publisher."

Fortunately I was able to write to Bolin the next day and tell him that the matter we had discussed could probably be arranged, but as things turned out it was not until March, 1937, that I saw my unknown friend again. I was standing in the hall of the Grand Hotel in Salamanca when I heard a familiar voice behind me. "After all, we didn't need those machine guns, but thank you all the same." Then we shook hands and had a drink. Not till he had gone did I realise that he had not expressed the faintest surprise at seeing me . . . yet after all, why should he? He hadn't expressed any when I offered him the machine guns.

Odd though all this appeared at the time, it was commonplace by contrast to its sequel, which was not only a sequel but a consequence. It was just a fortnight later when Luis Bolin rang up and asked me to lunch. I looked at my engagements

and suggested a day next week. "No, no, I'm afraid it must be to-day. It's important." I presumed that it was connected with my last Spanish excursion and suggested as much discreetly. Yes, it had a good deal to do with it. This was good enough for me and bad enough for my previously appointed guest, who luckily was on the telephone.

We lunched at Simpson's and de la Cierva completed the party. We began with appropriate gestures of conspiracy, *more Hispanico*. We must have a quiet table. By the time Bolin and de la Cierva, after much whispering, had rejected every vacant table in the room, hardly any one could have been unaware of our pressing need for privacy. Eventually, as if to secure the maximum of attention to our movements, Bolin persuaded the head waiter to ask a mild and unobtrusive citizen of London eating his saddle of mutton at a side-table to move elsewhere. We wanted to be quite alone. When we at last sat down, de la Cierva apologised for the delay; he found, he explained, the impenetrable envelope of secrecy in which for some weeks he had been obliged to shroud his movements very embarrassing at times. I was more than sympathetic, for it was clear to me that he had been for some weeks the most conspicuous man in London and Paris. I was not surprised to hear that, on his last visit to Paris, when he had decided on the Louvre as the best meeting place with his fellow-conspirators, he had gone there, "quite secretly," he emphasised, only to find half the staff of the Spanish Embassy scattered round the galleries. But the inventor was a psychologist as well as a man of resource. He attached himself to a couple of ladies whose interest in art was obviously not rigorously exclusive, for, as he explained, no Spaniard, whatever his politics, would fail to retire in a situation of that kind.

By this time we had begun to eat, and as the atmosphere then was less electric, I thought it would be safe to broach what I imagined was the subject of our meeting. Had they,

I asked, decided about the machinery we had been discussing? I gathered that they had not. And then it happened.

"I want a man and three platinum blondes to fly to Africa to-morrow."

"Must there really be *three*?" I asked, and at that Bolin turned triumphantly to de la Cierva. "I told you he would manage it."

"Well, perhaps two would be enough," Bolin said regretfully. "But of course the man must have had some experience; there might be trouble."

I said nothing for a moment and I saw anxiety spreading over their faces. It was real anxiety, so I explained that what was troubling me was the rival qualifications of three men, all of whom would be delighted to fly anywhere with two, though perhaps hardly with three platinum blondes. After all, there was the question of expense.

I was assured that need be no obstacle.

"Knowledge of Spanish?" I asked.

"But that's surely impossible," said de la Cierva incredulously.

"Oh, no," I said, having made up my mind. "May I telephone?"

I might telephone, and I did. I had been tossing up in my mind between George Fairfax, Francis Yeats-Brown and Hugh Pollard, but after all the job was Pollard's by rights, for he had experience of Moroccan, Mexican and Irish revolutions—and, of course, this meant war. And he knew Spanish.

"Can you fly to Africa to-morrow with two girls?" I asked, and heard the expected reply. "Depends upon the girls."

"You can choose," said I in my best business accents. "I'll bring two Spanish friends down to see you this afternoon."

"Right," said Pollard. "I'll expect you to tea."

"There's only one point I ought to mention," I said as Hugh was ringing off. "The aeroplane may be stolen when you get there. In that case you come back by boat."

"First-class?"

"Why not?"

"Right. Can do. Good-bye."

That might have seemed the hardest part of my job, but there was still the business of getting to Pollard to be solved. Train was impossible and no one knew the way to Fernhurst. De la Cierva, the practical man, suggested buying a map, and so we finished our lunch and went to Phillip's in the Strand. We bought our map of Sussex easily and as we were leaving Bolin said, "Let's get a map of Spain and North Africa. It might be useful." It was. The next time I saw that map it in General Headquarters at Salamanca.

Then to Fernhurst. I got them as far as the pub and then found myself lost, but I rang up Hugh again and got the final directions, and at last we arrived. All this time I had been told no more than I have put down here, but I am by profession a prophet and when I saw Pollard I took him on one side and explained to him, with an assurance that I could not possibly have justified, that his aeroplane, containing three self-styled English tourists, would be stolen, if the anticipated crisis arose, at the Canaries, to take General Franco to Morocco. But of course nothing was to be said about this that afternoon.

Round the table we got down to business. Passports, money, the route to Casablanca. Afterwards, anything might happen.

"Pack a gun?"

And again de la Cierva laughed, and said, "This is incredible."

Then began the most arduous search of all. Pollard's daughter was to be one of the party, but the other girl was out—no telephone inquiries could locate her. All that was

known was that she was delivering chickens somewhere and that she hadn't got a passport.

And so the Last Crusade began on a hot July afternoon with four men searching frantically up and down Sussex lanes for a girl delivering chickens and who had not got a passport.

In despair we turned into the pub, and there, the heavens being kind and the bar being open, we found her.

"Dorothy, come here. You're going to Africa to-morrow," Hugh shouted cheerfully.

"Africa, where's that? Who does it belong to?"

"Oh, you know, it used to belong to Cecil Rhodes, but now it belongs to Mussolini."

"Oh, that place." Dorothy, I never knew her surname, explained that the business of selling chickens could not very well be carried on from Africa. That was nothing, we could all put that right, we explained, with a highly liberal faith in the virtues of collective action. Money, passports, clothes, anything could be supplied, but go to Africa she must.

"Well, that's settled." I suddenly realised that I was going to be late, very late, for dinner, and in any case there was nothing more to be said. Dorothy, I had noticed kept her cigarettes in her knickers. She couldn't, she explained, afford a handbag. Obviously she was the type that went to Africa.

So we went home. Four days later, Calvo Sotelo was foully murdered by uniformed police in Madrid. Ten days later, General Franco, supposed to be safely relegated to the Canaries, raised his standard in Morocco. *Arriba Espana!* Luis Bolin was in Rome, and Hugh Pollard from the window of his bedroom in an hotel in Palmas heard the volley of musketry which begun and ended the revolution there. And Dorothy was fast asleep. And on the balcony of the Town Hall at Seville a colonel of the Army Service Corps was making the shortest and best speech in the annals of revolution. He had been asked to occupy the Municipal Offices and to arrest the officials. He did

what he was told, but only became uneasy when a large and curious crowd assembled and asked to be told what it was all about. He was a man of few words, and in any case, he was by no means clear about it himself. However, he went out on to the balcony, and called for silence.

"Neither this," he said, raising the clenched fist, "nor this," giving the Fascist salute. "Viva Espana."

And yet people say that soldiers are stupid.

The action of the generals who saved Spain, and Europe, in July, 1936, was not of course a military revolt. That was just propaganda. Hardly anything that has really happened in Spain since July, 1936, bears any resemblance to what has been reported. Resurgent Spain found herself under army leaders for the simple reason that the army leaders were the only people left in official positions of any authority who were not parties to the reign of murder and sacrilege which had culminated in the murder of Calvo Sotelo. But, if they remained in authority, they remained without men over whom to exercise it. The government had been unable, ever since it came into office, to put down disorder. The situation resulting was clearly an impossible one. Soldiers and police cannot be forced indefinitely to remain passive spectators of grave acts of public disorder and the foulest of crimes. The Government had accordingly dismissed the 1935 class to their homes in June, 1936, and had not, in July, 1936, called up the 1936 class. Whether charity urges us to decide that this action synchronised by pure coincidence with the date of the Communist rising, which was fixed for the end of June, or the beginning of July is a moot point, which I will leave for tenderer consciences. It is sufficient to record that it did in fact coincide with the murder of Calvo Sotelo, which was taken by men of all shades of opinion as the signal, not for an army rising, but for the long-expected Communist revolt.

The plans for the Communist *coup*, which have now been in the hands of the Salamanca Government for some months, provide a careful time-table for the outbreak of the revolution and the organisation of revolutionary cadres, and give the personnel of the Revolutionary Government to be set up, with Largo Caballero at its head. The paragraphs detailing the arrangement for the beginning of the revolution contain the statement that immediately the signal—five maroons—was given, a Fascist rising is to be simulated.

The same document also contains the following decisions:

"The 'radios' will begin to act, the T.U.V. undertaking to seize the General Post and Telegraph Office, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of War. The district 'radios' will attack the Police Stations and X.Y.Z. the Police Headquarters. A special 'radio,' composed solely of machine-gunners and bombers will attack the Ministry of 'Gobernacion' (Interior) from the following streets . . .

"The orders are for all anti-revolutionaries to be immediately executed. The revolutionaries of the Popular Front will be called upon to second the movement and, should they refuse to do so, will be expelled from Spain."

At one of the meetings at which these plans for a rising in June or July, 1936, were drawn up, French and Russian Communists officially represented their parties. Among the decisions taken were the following:

(8) To hold a meeting in Madrid on June 10 next at the premises of the International Library at Calle Pablo Iglesias, No. 11 Chamartin de la Rosa, to which the following are invited:—Thorez, Cachin, Auriol, Fonchaus, Ventura, Dimitroff, Largo Caballero, Diaz, Carillo, Guileerom Anton, Pestana, Garcia Oliver and Aznar.

(9) To entrust one of the Madrid 'radios'—No. 25 composed of active members of the Police Force—with the task

of eliminating the prominent political and military men likely to play an important rôle in the counter-revolution.

The murder of Calvo Sotelo is thus proved to have been planned in advance as a definite stage in a revolutionary plot against the elected Government of Spain by the friends of Caballero. No wonder that it was accepted by all parties, both of the Right and of the Left, as the signal that the revolution had begun. To be fair there was, on July 19th, 1936, little pretence in Spain itself that it was anything but a Communist revolution which had broken out. In all the villages in the south and in all the ports, bands of revolutionaries went about the streets crying, not "Down with the Army" or "Long live constitutional government," but "Long live the Revolution" or "Long live Anarchy," this latter in the towns, where the Anarchists were more powerful than their Communist allies.

It was against this Revolution, long foreseen, not against the legitimate authority of a constitutional government that the generals revolted. But in every case, and without exception or qualification, they put themselves forward not as leaders of the army (which for the moment everywhere had ceased to exist), but as champions of the people, claiming popular support.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. At Seville, Queipe de Llano had 183 men. At Pampluna, Mola had 450. At Saragossa, Cabanellas had a bare 300. And in Morocco, Franco landed from one aeroplane in mufti, unarmed, without a man or even a dog to take care of him. And the heroic Moscardo at Toledo had no men under his "command" at all. The garrison of the Alcazar, in addition to a few artillery officers taking a course, consisted of civilians and police, who came in voluntarily, some officers from the local arsenal, whose colonel stood by the government, and nine cadets who

came back to Toledo from Madrid especially for the siege. In fact, at Toledo the majority of the soldiers and of the officers on the station were among the besiegers, not among the besieged.

Acting as they did, those chivalrous and brave men who first challenged the government, took their lives in their hands and more than half paid the supreme penalty. It is permissible, in a world where neither folly nor ignorance is a criminal offence, to challenge the rightness of these men's conduct. It is an offence against public decency—and let us remember that the future of democratic institutions depends upon the subsistence of a reasonable measure of public decency—to represent them as swaggering bullies trampling down the masses by brute force. On the mainland of Spain the appeal of the Generals was made, and could only be made, to the civilian population, and only where the civilian population were both able to express their view and expressed a view hostile to the nominal government, were the Generals able to assume that authority which the government had so shamefully refused to exercise in the face of murderous revolution, naked and undisguised.

The tragedy of Spain to-day lies indeed in this, that the revolt against the government so far from being a military revolt was a popular revolt, and therefore it has been necessary to improvise not only the ancillary services on which an army to-day is so fatally dependent, but to train officers at the same time as men. There is, in this regard, all the difference in the world between attack and resistance. The red armies in Madrid, Bilbao and elsewhere are also untrained and unorganised. They are by now immeasurably inferior in discipline and in moral to the Nationalist forces. But, as all history proves, untrained and undisciplined troops can fight a defensive war for months before they are fit to conduct an offensive. Franco has, of course, the Foreign Legion, but the

vital historical fact which must be recovered from the scrap-heap of our short and partial memoirs is that this magnificent infantry force—and during the whole of my war experience I never saw finer troops, not even excepting the flower of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps whom I saw at Gallipoli in May, 1915—was not on the mainland of Spain during the crucial and decisive weeks of July, 1936. The part played in the Great War, in 1914, by our own regular army was played in Spain, in August, 1936, by retired generals and unarmed civilians.

And still to-day it is a civilians' war. As I motored through the whole length and breadth of Nationalist Spain in March, 1937—from San Sebastian to Vittoria, Burgos, Salamanca, Seville, Malaga, Algerciras, Xeres and Toledo to the western suburbs of Madrid—I saw everywhere sights that tugged at my heart-strings. For this was England again, the England of my youth. In all the open spaces men were drilling—boys and fathers of families and the inevitable drill instructors, and young officers who needed drilling as badly as their own men. And in the lines before Madrid the same memories came to life. The same humour, the same courage, the same queer, heroic and untidy characters, and there, piled against the firing steps, the same rifles with a cork or a piece of yesterday's newspaper stuck in the muzzle. Surely this must be the Hawke Battalion? But when I got to company headquarters I was awakened from my dream, for here we were taken to an observation post from which the whole enemy position was visible, for the simple reason that it was itself visible to the enemy from every part of the line. We were told to stand on one side, as being safer, and the company commander, standing on the other, demonstrated the points of interest. As he talked, our party one by one came over on to his side and was joined by at least half a dozen of the officers and N.C.O.'s, each anxious to show us some new thing. And no one noticed that the "safe" side of

the O.P. was deserted, for this, spiritually, was still 1914. The battalion was in the line for the first time and it was a great life. And on the way back they showed us a short cut, across the open where a sniper operated; we had, they told us, to be careful. We were to go out one at a time at intervals—a perfect Bisley target, I thought, and meditated a run. But of course it couldn't be done. After all, I was, for the time being, the British Navy, and the infantry, as represented by General Fuller, had walked, oh, so slowly. And behind me came Bengal Lancer and as he stepped gratefully, but very gracefully into the communication trench, there came the once-familiar "ping" of a bullet striking the tree we had just passed. "That was grand," said Y.B. "That was bloody silly," said I, determined to keep up the navy's reputation for common sense. And so down the long communication trench which came nearly up to my waist. But, oh, what a difference that makes!

I had not, however, gone to Spain to recapture old memories, but to get the wherewithal to kill new and foul lies. Aha! say the wiseacres, you didn't go with an open mind! So what you say is valueless.

Of course I did not go with an open mind. I went with my mind stocked with all (be it little or much) of what life has taught me in forty-four years. Should I be a better witness if life had taught me nothing? I also knew the bare historical facts, of which my countrymen pretend still an encyclopædic ignorance. But I wanted to see for myself, just as long ago I had wanted to see King Alfonso. There might be just one fact left out of the picture, but it might be an important one.

And so indeed it proved. I had expected a lot. I had expected to find the appurtenances of civilised living, the appearance of public order, the decent conduct of public affairs. But what I had not expected was to find in so confined a space so much elementary virtue. I do not refer to courage; gangsters have

courage and even racketeers know how to die. I mean an integrity of purpose and a self-discipline adequate to its achievement.

The administration of nationalist Spain is nothing if not democratic, using the term in its social sense. The atmosphere everywhere is that of the English front line in the Great War, not of the headquarters or the base. At Salamanca, which is the seat not only of the high command but also of the Foreign Office and the heads of the civil administration, you meet in the Grand Hotel war correspondents, the highest military and civil authorities, hospital nurses, tourists, officers from the front, junior officers on the staffs, civil servants, civilians, and private soldiers of the volunteer forces. In four years of the Great War I never saw a war correspondent, and only once saw the Commander-in-Chief. In one day at Salamanca I saw lunching in the restaurant every important figure in the Government, in the high command, and in the forces and in the administration, as well as the staffs of the two accredited embassies and a number of prominent literary men into the bargain, and no formalities. I mention these impressions here because they surprised me a good deal. If the national Government errs, it errs on the side of informality, of clemency and of casualness to friend and foe. Go where you like ; say what you like. This attitude is born of an unshakeable conviction, which is certainly borne out by a mass of evidence, that all classes in Spain are wholly, solidly, behind the generalissimo. Seeing nationalist Spain, it is impossible not to fall a victim to the same conviction. No one asks who you are and what is your business. No one is inaccessible; no one has anything to conceal.

The Nationalist Fighting Force

The creation in six months of the forms of ordered government and the reality of a free life is an astonishing achievement.

The creation of an army of half a million, including supply and administrative services for three armies fighting on four fronts, is even more astonishing. Only men up to twenty-six have so far been called up, and still vast reserves of man-power are available. That the army which is fighting this war is a Spanish army is unquestionable, but some estimates of the fighting strength which one hears are fantastic—notably the story of four Italian divisions on the Madrid front and of large German forces in the field elsewhere. There are no German fighting troops and never have been. There are a few Germans, in the technical services, behind the lines—mainly, I believe, in the depôt services and in the repair shops. There are also Italian volunteers—and a handful of Irish—in the Foreign Legion. There are also the Moors, whose numbers, again, are fantastically exaggerated. These last are, however, part of the Spanish regular army, and their presence excites no alarm. I saw a couple of hundred disembarking at Algeciras, and the women and children turned out to clap them as they walked through the streets smiling and singing. As with about everything else in Spain to-day, the truth about the Moors is precisely the opposite of what is stated. They are smiling, benign and kindly, but not good shock troops. They regard the war as a holy war, and their discipline is excellent; but they are, so I was told, only good when fighting side by side with the Spanish Foreign Legion—which is the backbone of the national army.

The Truth about the Fighting

The front runs from the coast east of Malaga to the frontier at Irun, with Madrid forming a deep but increasingly narrow re-entrant. To hold this front as the line was held in France in the Great War would need an army of two million men on each side, and even then there would be no margin for effective concentration of a "mass of manœuvres" behind the lines.

The war in patches is surprisingly like the Western Front, but, in general, it is a mountain war, fought, not by brigades and divisions, but by mixed columns of two to three thousand men. It is not a war of tanks or field artillery. It will be won by mechanised infantry, which means moral and organisation fused to white heat at the strategic points, which, again, means leadership behind as well as in front. Both are there, but, fortunately for Spain, only on one side. The Red army is bottled in Madrid. It may, assisted by the weather, survive this attack; it may survive the next: but it cannot now break out—except to commit suicide in the open. Why did the Reds hold Madrid? There lies the clue to the Spanish Civil War. If there were a Red Spain they would have abandoned Madrid long ago; but there is no Red Spain. There is only the Basque separatist movement, in uneasy alliance with the Communist miners of Oviedo (with some support from Labour elements in Bilbao and Santander), the Catalan separatist movement, in even more uneasy alliance with the Anarchist Party which dominates Barcelona, and the armed mob of Madrid, now called the Government militia. The International Brigade is a formidable fighting force, but it is not strong enough to take the initiative, because it has no supply or administrative services behind it and no friends waiting deliverance in front of it. The Red strategy, given a Red Spain, was obvious. They should have aimed at breaking the link between Franco's northern and southern armies and rolling up the flank of the northern army till it was thrown back on their own northern revolutionary force at Bilbao. But such a movement demands a friendly population or an overwhelming force to protect communications. The Reds have neither. If nationalist Spain were not unquestionably and pretty well unanimously behind General Franco, it would be impossible for him to find, from a bare 500,000 men under arms, fighting troops to conduct offensives on four disconnected fronts—at Oviedo, north and

south of Madrid, and in the south. The essential communications of these four forces cover an aggregate of thousands of miles. They are wholly unprotected, except by the normal peace-time establishment of civil guards and, in Seville and other large towns, of the municipal police. I except the traffic-control posts, manned by elderly volunteers and wearing in the Basque country the scarlet beret of the *Requetes*, and in the rest of Spain the blue forage cap, with red piping, of the Spanish Phalanx. I except them, because there are not military detachments, but the objective sign, ever present, of the spontaneous loyalty and enthusiasm of the villagers and townsmen to the new regime.

There are, incorporated in the army, in military formations, under army officers probably 50,000 *Requetes* and 100,000 Phalangists. In the whole of Spain the total of these volunteer organisations is immensely greater, probably three times as great. Here is the new Spain. But we must not set down the regular army as being, in contradistinction, the old Spain. The regular army is no more the old army than was the British Army of 1916 the same that fought at Mons. The army in Spain to-day is non-political. In the old Spain the army was forced into politics by the apathy or corruption of the political classes, by landlord absenteeism, by the lack of leadership from the Church. To-day all this is changed. The new Spain is intensely political, and the army need no longer charge itself, and has no intention of charging itself, with political problems. The Phalanx and the *Requetes* will look after these. A vigorous social policy is the demand of the young men and women, who have turned their backs on the old Spain for ever. The separation of Church and State and the break-up of the big estates, the restoration of agriculture and the improvement of working conditions and the legal limitation of profits are articles of faith to the Spanish Phalanx. It is rigidly and even bitterly contra-capitalist. The Barcelona

merchants will get as short shrift as the Barcelona Communists, and the absentee landlords will get even less. In Seville at least one industry is already reorganised on corporate lines, but the key to Spanish reconstruction is land settlement, and village reconstruction and a vigorous educational policy. These things are talked of everywhere.

There will, said General Franco in his famous speech of October 1, be no room for parasites in the new Spain. The State will not be a "confessional" State, but will regulate its relations with the Church, defining their respective spheres of influence. The workers will be given an absolute guarantee against capitalist exploitation. But, above all, it is the rebirth of the Spanish soul that is desired. The teachings of false prophets, which have, in the words of the Generalissimo, accomplished "the moral assassination of a people," must be challenged by positive doctrines of social justice based on the unchanging principles of Christian morality.

In this course of tour, I met notabilities and private soldiers, high officials and low, peasants, shopkeepers, innkeepers, policemen, waiters, bank clerks, landladies and garage proprietors—no man can ever have met more garage proprietors in so short a time. Most of these I met quite casually. All were of the same temper. This thing must be carried through, not for profit, not even for glory, but for the sake of mere human decency. To bear the burden of men's hate and men's love is the penalty of rulers, but the burden here in Spain was carried by all. There are no leaders in Spain to-day. Men are not fighting for Franco; Franco is fighting with them. Having talked with him, I realised, as every one does, that that in itself is a privilege. He may or may not be a great man as the world judges, but he is certainly something a thousand times more important—a supremely good man, a hero possibly; possibly a saint. I know, I think, a little of men. I judge that here is a man who is sustained in his

immense responsibilities by force of character. Certainly he is neither ambitious nor dictatorial. I like to think that our most un-English hero, General Gordon, was a man of the same pattern. I think he was. There shines out of the translucent depths of Franco's eyes a serene certitude. It follows that he is filled with a profound humility. That is what strikes you first when you talk with him. Perhaps he is not a man of great power, but he is a man of great charity. And is not charity wanted more than power in Europe to-day?

Passing through the different offices of his staff on your way to the Generalissimo, you see that due attention is paid to forms and ceremonies. At the head of the stairs are two superb Moorish sentries, a generous and just tribute from an ardent son of the Church to the loyalty of the Moslems of Spanish Morocco. In the ante-room there is the usual bevy of officials and staff officers. But when you pass through you leave behind you all the fuss and the bother of government, all the bustle and stiff formality of command. These things may belong to the kingdom, but from elsewhere the Power and the Glory.

EPILOGUE

AS I sit down to write my own humble valediction to the Georgian epoch, the last of the great actors in that adventure retires from the scene. With Mr. Baldwin's departure the curtain is rung down. He was, in some respects, the greatest of the Georgians, certainly the most characteristic. If he solved none of our problems, he faced them all with courage, dignity and equanimity. The Victorian manner served him well, and in serving him, served us in more than one notable crisis. He carried the Victorian manner into an age whose problems were not, as he was perhaps conscious, fully within its compass. It was perhaps this fact, not any length of days which prompted his retirement. There was in the manner of his going not a little of melodrama. No statesman of the Georgian age had such an unerring eye for popular effects. History will condemn him on one count only; that, while a supremely good judge of men in the mass he seldom recognised, nor ever approved as colleagues, men of outstanding talent. For colleagues he preferred and obtained good average men. His one experimental appointment was unhappy to the edge of disaster. If there be some wisdom in the saying that a national leader must be judged chiefly by the character and abilities of the colleagues he leaves behind him to carry on the task of leadership, Mr. Baldwin will not rank with the very great ministers of state. To prefer to men of reckless and improvident judgment, men with no capacity for forming any judgment at all, is to sacrifice the integrity of the future to the comfort of the present. Yet the present, to a man called on to bear its responsibilities, must always be the first consideration, and it is possible that when the history of the last

ten years comes to be written with full knowledge, we shall find that most of Mr. Baldwin's manifest hesitations and imperceptions were inspired by the desire first to prevent the wrong thing being done, and only secondly to the desire, in difficult circumstances, to do nothing at all. On four occasions Mr. Baldwin was forced, like Joffre on the Marne, into action, and on these occasions he did what was right with courage and the necessary emphasis: unlike Joffre, he not only deserved but received the credit. But then Mr. Baldwin was a politician.

He leaves us with our problems unsolved; constitutional chaos in India, Asia on the verge of war, the European concert in ruins, the League of Nations a hypocritical façade concealing an uneasy and conscious-stricken resurrection of the Triple Entente, our own financial situation—on which so much of the world depends—one of growing gravity. The world, not to put too fine a point on it, is very ill at ease, and Mr. Baldwin's England not much less than M. Blum's France, Herr Hitler's Germany or the Duce's new Italian Empire. Yet we remain; we have vast reserves of power, of endurance and of discipline. And we owe this largely to Mr. Baldwin. When these qualities are energised by any clear intellectual appreciation of the world's problems and our duty towards them, we may again take our place among the Great Powers. For this second chance, England's debt to the late Prime Minister is notable. We shall have, however, to forget Mr. Baldwin's analysis of the world problem if we are to profit by his skill in equipping us for its solution.

The world unrest has nothing, of course, to do with dictatorships and democracies. The need of the world is for peace and freedom, and neither democracy in its present form nor dictatorship in any of the models so far offered to us will give us either. The basis of liberty is economic independence, and the world is moving rapidly—even more rapidly in the democracies than elsewhere—towards its extinction. This

movement imposes on all governments a desperate and ever-increasing responsibility for the livelihood of their peoples, and the battle for economic frontiers and markets must become increasingly bitter. That way lies war. That our own people have the right to dismiss their dictators at infrequent intervals is happily true. That they have not the right in certain other countries is unfortunately also true. But all people alike live under the shadow of a governmental system which they cannot escape and on which they are being compelled increasingly to rely, and which our own people no more than those of Italy or Russia can change without a social and political revolution. As for political oppression, we have brought the politics of the machine age to concert pitch, and though we can talk as loudly as we like we can no more break the machines than can the anti-fascists in Rome or the Jews in Berlin.

If I close on this note, it is not one of complaint. All men have the need to be governed, and our English system fulfils this need better than most of its rivals. Government, however, is a means not an end, and it is imperative, if freedom is to be preserved, to prevent any further incursions of government on the legitimate tasks of free men, and above all, on their freedom not to choose between rival politicians (which is a small enough matter when they want, as a rule, none of those between whom they are permitted to choose) but to choose the means to earn their livelihood and the way in which they shall live their lives, how they shall bring up their children, what they shall eat, what they shall drink, where they shall live and wherewith they shall be clothed.

As to freedom of opinion, that is a great matter but not, as we so often say, assured. The great Press Lords can say what they like about the politicians, and we can think of the politicians, if we choose, what they say. But no man can say what he likes about the press lords, or about the great tradesmen or about the private lives of any one at all. And those who, like

myself, disagree profoundly with most that public men write in the national press, who desire truth, not falsehood or soothing syrup, about ourselves and the rest of the world, who are old-fashioned enough to think that the public have a right to know what is happening and not merely what the Foreign Office would like us to think is happening—those people are not so ready to wax enthusiastic about the freedom of opinion. It is true that I, or any one else, can run a magazine for the printing of truth (or, for that matter, of falsehood) and no one will hinder us. As Editor of the *English Review* I should have been imprisoned in Germany and shot in Russia. But no amount of *English Reviews* will *in the short run*, and to-day it is the short run which counts, make up for the deliberate creation of an uninformed public opinion by the national press. What is needed is a vigorous exploitation of the few real liberties left to us—the liberties of speech and of public meeting particularly. We still have this heritage of our liberty-loving ancestors. We make precious poor use of it. We prefer to turn on the loudspeakers and hear a party hack praising us for our loyalty to himself.

John Morley speaks somewhere of his legitimate pride in having "said things in public assemblies which made a difference." Nothing said since 1914 in any public assembly has made any difference at all. That is the simple and shattering answer to our democratic complacency, which we must cast off if we are to remain a great people. A people which cannot make itself heard is no longer great. Democracy is the most expensive of all forms of government and we do not remedy the ill by paying a higher salary to the men whom the machines put in their places. We must recast our system of election. It is no coincidence that the one notable contribution by a private member to the Statute Book in living memory, A. P. Herbert's Marriage Bill, is the result of a freak candidature in a freak constituency.

A. P. Herbert may or may not have left the secular marriage law better than he found it, but his achievement is most notable because it points the road to the recovery of our liberties. The House of Commons can still legislate if it chooses. The machines rule us only because we choose to be so ruled, and to return to parliament caucus nominees instead of free and representative men. There are not half a dozen constituencies to-day in which an independent candidate can stand with the slightest hope of election, and there are not half a dozen independent-minded politicians with the private means to enable them to finance the organisation which alone can give them a chance even of what Max Beerbohm called a *succès de fiasco*. Here, in the standardisation of opinion which gives the caucus nominee an immense advantage, and in the cost of creating and organising a healthy public opinion, is the root of those political sicknesses which have bred the fashionable counter-irritant of fascism. We shall only escape from fascism by an organised voluntary effort against the caucuses. We shall get our most effective aid from the caucuses themselves, for their unceasing chorus of self praise is disgusting far more people every day than is generally realised. We are not impressed by seeing a crowd of politicians leaning on each other for support and singing "For we are jolly good fellows." Still less are we impressed by the call to defend what are called the "public servants" in other countries from the wrath of their respective publics. We have our virtues, no doubt, but let us, for the next ten years, concentrate our attention on our deficiencies, which are evident enough. It will be time enough to reform the world when we have reformed ourselves.

I should, I suppose, have closed this book with some neat, perhaps even epigrammatic, summary of the twenty-six years of the reign of King George V., years of social and political change, of military adventure, of intense intellectual coming

and going. I had at one time this intention, but the age lends itself little to such a task. Our judgment on the age, like our judgment on Mr. Baldwin's achievement, will depend largely on what comes after. The age has seen the failure of every institution which seemed secure at its beginning, except the Papacy. Some institutions have survived impaired; others have disappeared from the scene. The balance of power and energy has visibly shifted. The long dominion of the Atlantic Powers is coming to an end. What we call free institutions may survive in western Europe, but they mean to all of us to-day something very different from what they meant in 1911. Government casts a lengthening shadow, and liberty recedes.

There remains a solid basis for optimism. I do not refer to the native good sense of the British people, nor to the weight of armaments we are now building. The one is the measure of the failure of the other. I refer to the re-emergence of Christianity on the stage of politics, in part the cause, in part the consequence of the failure of the secular formulæ on which loud and foolish men sought to build the new world order which to-day lies in ruins about us. On these ruins something better can and will be built, but it can be built only on One Foundation.